MUHAMMAD IN THE QURAN

ALI MUSA RAZA

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By

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Foreword

Muhammad the Prophet of Islam led a pious, exemplary and useful life. Within a brief period of twenty three years he changed the entire course of history.

It is a growingly accepted fact that the bases of modern civilization were provided by the ideology and the objective way of the thinking contributed by the great Prophet of Arabia. His life, therefore has a direct relevance to the modern age.

Muhammad lived in the full light of history. His followers have very carefully and faithfully preserved every action of his public and private life.

There is thus abundance of material available for the study of the life of an important benefactor of mankind.

Apart from this valuable material which is mostly in the shape of Traditions and sayings on the life of the Prophet can also be traced in the Holy Quran which was revealed to Muhammad. The approach of the Quran is objective, references are not direct, the name of Muhammad is mentioned only four times in the Quran, while the name of Moses has been mentioned no less than 127 times. But since the whole of the Quran is addressed to Muhammad it constitutes a most valuable source of authentic information regarding the life of the Prophet. Strangely, this source has not been fully utilized so far. Not many attempts have been made to depict the life of the Prophet from the well preserved verses of the Quran. The scholarly efforts of late Ali Musa Raza are to be commended for attempting the life of the Prophet as depicted in the Quran.

By getting this book published I am fulfilling an obligation, I owe to the author who left us on 17th Sept. 1970.

I express deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal of Kashmir for going through the typed draft of the author, improving it and making necessary corrections in the text.

I am thankful to Mr. Mohammad Ahmad of Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, for the keen interest taken in bringing out this book which I am sure will serve a long felt need. I hope this book, being one of the pioneering works of its kind, will pave the way for more studies on similar lines.

Aziz Bagh
Hyderabad
February 12, 1980.

Hasanuddin Ahmed

Introduction

The Quran is a record of all the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him) received by him during a period of twenty three years of his Apostolate. Not only does it give glimpses from the lives of some of the prophets who preceded him, but as it is addressed directly to the Prophet himself throughout his Mission, it refers to important incidents of his life and the reforms that he brought about, serving as beacon light and guidance to those who follow him. A study of these references reveals in an authentic manner the life-story of the Prophet himself as mirrored in the pages of the Holy Quran.

Hither to the life of this unique personality written by eminent scholars of the East and the West was mainly based upon Hadith literature called *Kutub-i-Seyer*. Among the earliest biographies of the Prophet were those of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisham. *Tabaqat-i-Ibn Sa'ad*, *Tabaqat-i-Kabir* or *Kitabul Waqidi*, Tabri, *Sirat-i-Shami*, Abul Fida, Masudi, and *Muwaheb Ladunniya*. All these works are, as it were, a collection of indiscriminate and un-investigated traditions and have become one mass of undigested material in which genuine traditions are indiscriminately mixed up with spurious and puerile traditions.

Most of the European scholars tried to write the biography of the Prophet with the sole object of representing him as an impostor and therefore their works contain mere abuses and harsh and uncharitable expressions, thereby displaying their ignorance of the subject. These include the English, the French, the German and the Italian writers. However, Sir William Muir's *Life of Mohamet* is considered to be the outstanding biography

emanating from the pen of a Christian scholar. But the motive with which this work was undertaken was the same that adversely affected the minds of many European writers. As an author William Muir exposes his own prejudices by straining, twisting and distorting the plainest of facts connected with Islam and Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Yet there are some European writers who have taken a better view of their subject and have endeavoured to defend the divine Messenger against biased antagonists. Edward Gibbon, the celebrated historian, Godfrey Higgins, Thomas Carlyle, John Devonport and the French Historian, Lamartine, may be mentioned among such distinguished authors.

Gibbon expresses himself as follows :

"The creed of Mohamet is free from suspicion or ambiguity and the Koran is a glorious testimony to the Unity of God. The Prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets, on the rational principle that whatever rises must set, that whatever is born must die, that what is corruptible must decay, and perish. In the author of the universe his rational enthusiasm confessed and adored an Infinite and Eternal Being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of His own nature and deriving from Himself all moral and intellectual perfection. These sublime truths thus announced in the language of the Prophet are firmly held by his disciples and defined with metaphysical precision by the interpreters of the Koran. A philosophic theist might subscribe to the popular creed of the Mohametans, a creed too sublime perhaps for our present faculties. What object remains for the fancy or even the understanding, when we have abstracted from the unknown substance all ideas of time and space, of motion and matter, of sensation and reflection ? The first principle of reason and revelation was confirmed by the voice of Mohamet ; his proselytes from India to Morocco are distinguished by the name of Unitarians and the danger of idolatry has been prevented by the interdiction of images."

Godfrey Higgins remarks :

"No relic, no image, no picture and no mother of God disgrace his religion. No such doctrine as the efficacy of faith without works, or that of a death-bed repentance, plenary indulgences, absolution or particular confession operate first to corrupt, then, to deliver up his followers into the power of a priestcraft which would always be more corrupt and more degraded than themselves. No, indeed ! The adoration of one God without mother or mystery or pretended miracles, and the acknowledgment that he, a man, was sent to preach the duty of offering adoration to the Creator alone, constituted the simple doctrinal part of the religion of the great Unitarian of Arabia."

Thomas Carlyle observes thus

"Our current hypothesis about Mahomet that he was a scheming impostor, a falsehood incarnate, that his religion a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man was disgraceful to ourselves only. It is really time to dismiss all that. The words this man spoke have been the life-guidance now of one hundred and eighty millions of men these twelve hundred years. A greater number of God's creatures believe in Mahomet's words at this hour than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by ? I for my part cannot form such supposition. One would be entirely at a loss what to think of this world at all, if quackery so grew and were sanctioned here......A false man found a religion ? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house, if he do not know and follow truly the properties of mortar, burnt clay, and whatever else he works in, it is no house that he makes but a rubbish heap. It will not stand for twelve centuries to lodge a hundred and eighty millions. It will fall straight way. A man must conform himself to nature's laws, be verily in communion with nature and the truth of things, or nature will answer him no, not at all. Speciosities are specious. Ah

me! a cogliostro, many cogliostros, prominent world leaders do prosper by their quackery for a day. It is like a forged bank-note; they get it passed out of their worthless hands: others, not they have to smart for it. Nature bursts up in fire-flames. French revolutions and such like proclaiming with terrible veracity that forged notes are forged."

Johan Devonport writes:

"Is it possible to conceive, we ask, that the man who affected such great and lasting reforms in his own country by substituting the worship of the One only true God for the gross and debasing idolatry in which his countrymen had been plunged for ages, who abolished infanticide, prohibited the use of spirituous liquors and games of chance (those sources of moral depravity) who restricted within comparatively narrow limits the unrestrained polygamy which he found in existence and practice—can we, we repeat, so great and zealous a reformer to have been a mere impostor or that his whole career was one of sheer hypocrisy? No, surely nothing but a consciousness of real righteous intentions could have carried Muhammad steadily and constantly, without ever flinching or wavering, without ever betraying himself to his most intimate connections and companions from his first revelation to Khadijah to his last agony in the arms of Ayesha.

"Surely a good and sincere man, full of confidence in his Creator who makes an immense reform both in faith and practice, is truly a direct instrument in the hands of God, and may be said to have a commission from Him. Why may not Muhammad be recognised no less than other faithful, though imperfect servants of God, serving Him faithfully, though imperfectly? Why may it not be believed that he was in his own age and country a preacher of truth and righteousness sent to teach his own people the Unity and righteousness of God, to give them civil and moral precepts suited to their conditions."

And last of all, Alphonse de Lamartine in his *Histoire de la Turquie* (Vol: I, pp. 276-280) states as follows:

"Never did man propose to himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime goal than what did the Prophet of Islam, because this goal was super-human...to sap the superstitions interposing between the creatures and the Creator, to render God to man and man to God, to restore the rational and holy idea of the Divinity in the chaos of material and disfigured gods of the idolatry.

"Again, never did man undertake, with such feeble means, a work so outmeasuring human faculties, since in the conception and the execution of such a grandiose design he had no instrument other than his single self along with such auxiliaries who were (so to say) a handful of barbarians in a corner of the desert.

"Finally, never did man accomplish in less time such an immense and lasting revolution in the world, for, in less than two decades after its predication. Islam...preached and armed...ruled over the three Arabias [Arabia Felix (Yemen), Arabia Deserta and Arabia Petra (Palestine)], conquered to the Unity of God the lands of Persia, Khorasan, Transoxiana, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, all the known parts of the continent of North Africa, many an island of the Mediterranean, Spain and part of the Gaule.

"If the grandeur of the design, smallness of the means, and immensity of the result are the measurements of the genius of a man, who can dare to compare humanly a great man of the modern history with Muhammad. The most famous (i.e., moderners) have not shaken except arms, laws, empires: they have not founded (if at all they have founded anything) except material powers which crumbled often before themselves; whereas this man (i.e., Muhammad) had shaken armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, millions of men on a third of the inhabitable part of the globe, nay, he had further shaken the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs, the souls; he has founded on a book whose every letter has become law, a spiritual nationality which encompasses peoples of all languages, and of all races; and he has inculcated as an

indelible character of this Muslim nationality the hatred of false gods and passion for the one and matterless God. This patriotism which has taken revenge from those who have profanated the heaven, has been the virtue of the children of Muhammad; the conquest of a third part of the earth for his doctrines was his miracle, or rather this was not the miracle proclaimed in the lassitude of the fabulous theogonies had in itself such a virtue that, when he caused it to explode on his lips, it conflagrated all the old temples of idols, and through its glamour illuminated a third of the world.

"Was this man an impostor? After having well studied his history, we do not think so. Imposture is the hypocrisy of conviction, and hypocrisy has not the power of conviction, even as lie has never the power of truth.

"If the force of projection is, in mechanics, the exact measure of the force of impulsion, the action is also, in history, the measure of the force of inspiration. An idea which takes so high, so far, and for such a long time, is really a strong idea; to be so sfrong it is necessary that it ought to have been very secure and very convincing.

"But his life, his devotion, his heroic blasphemies against the superstitions of his country, his audaciousness to affront the furies of the idolaters, his constancy in supporting for thirteen years at Mecca, in accepting the role of public scandal, and of almost a victim among his compatriots, and finally his flight, his incessant predications, his unequal wars, his confidence in his success, his superhuman serenity in reverses, his magnanimity in victory, his sole ambition of an idea, never of an empire, his ceaseless prayers, his systematic conversation with God, his death and his triumph from beyond the tomb, attest more a conviction than an imposture. It was this conviction which gave him the power to restore a doctrine. This doctrine was doubtless the Unity and matterlessness of God; the one said what God was and the other said what He was not; the one threw down with sword the false gods, the other inaugurated with the sword an idea.

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational doctrines, of a cult without images, founder of a score of earthly empires, and of a spiritual empire—this is what was Muhammad.

"From whichever scale one may measure the human grandeur, which man was grander ?

From the above quotations it will be seen that some unbiased writers of Christendom have now begun to realise that the Holy Prophet cannot but be Divinely inspired to bring about that wonderful reformation that stands to his credit for all time to come.

To form a true estimate of what he did we need not depend upon any of those Traditions, be they genuine or spurious, which have been the basis of the biographies of Muhammad, for, the Quran itself affords us the surest testimony of his life-work if we study it carefully.

We have tried in this book to place before our readers only those incidents of his life and Mission that find reference in the pages of the Holy Quran, just as we did in respect of all other prophets mentioned therein in our previous book *Lessons From the Stories of the Quran*, and the unrefutable evidence of these references is more than enough , to establish the fact that in the annals of mankind the Prophet Muhammad (peace by upon him) stands out as the greatest benefactor of humanity.

I am very thankful to Dr. Sayyid Abdul Latif, one of the greatest scholars of our time, patiently listened to my reading out the above pages, and thus made them acceptable to the reading public.

In the end, I humbly pray to the Almighty that this my humble endeavour to present to the world the life-story of His Exalted Messenger in the light of the Holy Quran, will be acceptable to Him, and He will, out of His infinite Grace make it the means of illuminating the hearts of those who have been groping in doubt about his great Mission. Amen !

Ali Musa Raza

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images, founder of a score of worldly empires, and of a spiritual empire—this is what was Muhammad.

"Then, whichever scale you may measure the human greatness, which man was greater?"

From the above quotations it will be seen that some eminent writers of Christendom have now begun to realise that the Holy Prophet cannot but be Divinely inspired to bring about that wonderful reformation that stands to his credit for all time to come.

For a true estimate of what he did we need not depend upon any of those Traditions or those genuine or spurious, which have been the base of the biographies of Muhammad, for, the Quran itself affords us the safest testimony of his character and personality.

However, in this book to place before our readers only some incidents of the life and Mission that find reference in the pages of the Holy Quran, just as we did in respect of all other prophets mentioned therein in our previous book *Stories of the Prophets of the Quran*, and the authentic evidence of these references is more than enough to establish the fact that in the annals of mankind the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stands out as the greatest benefactor of humanity.

I am very thankful to Syed Abdul Latif, one of the greatest scholars of our time, for having kindly agreed to my request and for having made many improvements in the book.

In the end, I humbly pray to the Almighty that this my humble endeavour to present to the world the life-story of the Prophet Muhammad in the light of the Holy Quran, will be accepted by Him and He will put in this book the means of illuminating the hearts of those who have been groping in doubt about his great Mission. Amen!

Ali Mohsin Raza

1

The Prophet's Advent Foretold in World Scriptures

The advent of the Prophet Muhammad, humanity's greatest teacher, was to be so momentous a matter that the Most High God gave the glad tidings thereof to the peaceless world through His prophets, urging their followers to receive him with open arms when he would make his appearance. The Quran refers to the covenant of the Biblical prophets with their peoples in these words :

1. "Behold! Allah made a covenant through the prophets saying: I give you the Book and wisdom — then comes to you an apostle confirming that which is with you; you must believe in him and render him help. He (God) said: Do you agree and take this My covenant as binding on you? They said : We agree. He said : Then bear witness and I too am with you among the witnesses." (3 : 81)

Towards the fulfilment of this covenant all the prophets of the world foretold the advent of Muhammad, the universal Messenger, and enjoined on their people to follow him when he would emerge. Though the Scriptures which are still extant in the name of some of these prophets have retained very little of

their original teachings, yet the prophecies that were made about this world-teacher have miraculously remained in tact and preserved to this day from the ravages of human interpolations. We shall now quote some of these prophecies confirming what is said above.

I. References in the Hindu Scriptures

The *Kantap Sukt* of *Atherva Veda* opens with this announcement :

1. "Listen with reverence the happy news that "Narashansah" (this is the exact literal translation of the Arabic term Muhammad) shall be praised. This Refugee (referring to the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medinah). We take into our protection against sixty thousand and ninety enemies (referring to the population of Mecca during Muhammad's time).

This Divine promise of protection when the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the "Narashansah" of the *Veda mantra* made his appearance on the stage of the world at Mecca was repeated in the following words of the Quran :

2. "Surely Allah will protect thee (O Muhammad !) from the attack of thy enemies." (5 : 67)

Besides the first *mantra* of the *Kantap Sukt* quoted above, there are altogether thirteen *mantras* elaborating the description of this saviour of mankind in the following terms :

2. "He is a camel-riding Rishi whose chariot touches the heavens. (this refers to the Prophet's Ascension). (2)

3. "He is *Mamah Rishi* who is given a hundred chains of gold, ten wreaths of flowers, three hundred good steeds, and ten thousand cows. (3) (The reference in this is to 100 companions who first migrated to Abyssinia, 10 companions called the "*Ashra-i-Mubashshira* the intimate disciples of the Prophet who were given the assurance of Paradise in their life-time, 300 steeds refer to the 300 companions of Badr fame, and the ten thousand cows refer to the ten thousand saintly companions at the

fall of Mecca. The word *Mamah* is standing for Mahamad of the Vyas Rishi' - see next prophecy)

4. "He and his followers are always mindful of their prayers and even in the field of battle they bow down before their Lord." (4) (This refers to the injunction of the Quran (4 : 102-103) wherein prayer is enjoined on the Faithful even on the field of battle).

5. "He shall give wisdom to the world." (this refers to the Holy Quran, as the Book of Wisdom for all ages). (5)

6. "He shall be the king of the world, the best of men, and a guide for the entire mankind." (6) (This refers to the personal traits of the Prophet as given in chapter 13 of this book).

7. "He has procured a secure dwelling for the people of the world, gives protection to everybody, and has spread peace in the world." (7 & 8) (The secure dwelling refers to Mecca, the place of security for all referring to verse (45 : 3) of the Quran, and the name of the religion which he preached is Islam which means "Peace."

8. "People thrive happily and prosper under his rule and from the depth of degradation they rise to the height of glory." (9 & 10) (This refers to the reformation brought about by Muhammad in the Arab world).

9. "He is asked to wake up and warm the world." (11) (This refers to verse (74:1-2) wherein the Prophet is commanded to rise add warn.

10. "He is extremely bountiful and generous." (12) (see chapter 13 Personal Traits of the Prophet).

11. "His followers have been saved from the hostility and the robbery of the devil." (13) (This refers to the Quranic verse (9 : 100) praising the companions of the Prophet. See Chapter 10).

In the last *mantra* the Rishi entreats him for the acceptance of his (the Rishi's) prayers and seeks his protection from harm and evil. (14).

Again the Maharishi Vyasaji, a great sage and seer of the Vedic times, when he was shown in a vision the coming of a world-Guru, wrote in his well-known book *Bhavishya Purana* which means the 'news of the future', thus :

2. "A spiritual teacher from a foreign country shall come with his companions. Mahamad shall be his name. The Raja bathing this Arab of an angelic disposition with sacred waters of the Ganges and five other purifying liquids, adored him with full faith and devotion and said : "I bow before thee. O thou pride of the human race, thou dweller of the desert, who bestows plentiful power for slaying the devil, who has been protected and preserved from thy wicked enemies. O thou, manifestation of the Supreme Being, accept me as thy slave, as one fallen at thy feet." (*Bhavishya Purana - Prati Sarg*, Part III : 3, 3, 5-8 printed in the Venkateshwar Press, Bombay).

In this eulogy of the Holy Prophet Maharishi Vyasaji has enumerated the following points :

1. The name of the Prophet is clearly stated as Mahamad.
2. He is said to be belonging to a sandy tract of land-Arabia.
3. Special mention is made of his companions. There has hardly been any prophet of the world who had such a host of companions all resembling him in piety.
4. He will be immune from sin, having an angelic disposition.
5. The Raja of India will show him his heart-felt reverence.
6. The Prophet will be given protection against his enemies.
7. He will kill the devil, root out idol-worship, and will do away with all sorts of vices.
8. He will be an image of the All-Powerful God.
9. He is regarded as the pride of mankind.
10. The Maharishi is proud to lie at his feet.

This prophecy is as clear as daylight, there being no shadow of doubt as to its application to Muhammad.

In continuation of the same quotation from *Bhavishya Purana* that is given above, a still clearer prophecy is found in *Shalokas* 10-27 where Maharishi Vyasaji has remarked about the Holy Prophet as follo ws :

> "The malechas have spoiled the well-known land of the Arabs. Arya dharma is not found in that country. Before also, there appeared a misguided fiend whom I have killed. (Perhaps this refers to Abraha who invaded Mecca to destroy the Kaba) He has now again appeared being sent by powerful enemy. To show these enemies the right path and to give them guidance the well-known Mahamad (Muhammad) who has been given by me the epithet of Brahma is busy in bringing the pishachas to the right path. O Raja ! You need not go to the land of the foolish Pishachas. You will be purified through my kindness where you are. At night he of the angelic disposition, the shrewd man in the guise of the Pishachas said to the Raja Bhoj ; O Raja! Your Arya dharma has been made to prevail over all religions but according to the commandment of Ishwer Permathma I shall enforce the strong creed of the meat-eaters. My follower will be a man circumcised, without a tail on his head, keeping beard. creating a revolution, announcing call to prayer (Azan) and will be eating all lawful things. He will eat all sorts of animals except swine. They will not seek purification from the holy shrubs but will be purified through warfare. On account of fighting the irreligious nations they will be known as Musalmans. I shall be the originator of this religion of the meat-eating nation."

The *Sama Veda* too narrates numerous prophecies about the advent of the Holy Prophet. We take up only one of these which occurs in *Sama Veda* II. 6-8:

> "Ahmed acquired religious Law (*Shari'a*) from his Lord. This law is full of wisdom. I receive light from him just as from the sun."

This prophecy confirms the following truths:

1. The Prophet's name Ahmed (अहृमिघि) is clearly mentioned.
2. He is said to have been given *Shari'a* by his Lord (referring to the Quran).

3. He is said to have been given wisdom along with it.
4. The Rishi is being enlightened through the *Shari'a* of the Prophet in the same way as the light of the sun brightens various objects.

These prophecies have been considered mysteries by those who could read these books in their original language but had they studied the history of the Holy Prophet with an open and unbiased mind, they would have realised that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the only person who fulfils all the terms of the prophecy.

II. Parsi Scriptures—The Zend Avesta.

Zoroaster was the founder of the Parso-Iranian national religion. He lived and taught some thousand years before Christ. The scriptures of this creed consist mainly of two big tomes. *Zend Avesta* and *Dasateer*. It is written in Zend Avesta Farvardin Yasht 13.

"O Zoroaster! Of the people of faith the mighty souls are those who bear the law and live upto it, of those believers who are not yet born but who shall kindle new life into the world."

Further in *Yasht* 28 the prophecy become more definite and distinct. It is stated :

"Compassionate conqueror shall he be (the holy founder of that people) and *Astvut Ereta* shall be is name—mercy personified ; a blessing unto the whole world ; saviour of all the nations ; polytheists shall he reclaim and the failings on the faithful shall he rectify and reform."

There is one Prophet and only one who answers completely to this description—Muhammad (peace be on him). The people of Mecca tyrannised over him and his companions in the most cruel manner and perpetrated inhuman atrocities to wipe them off the face of the earth. But a few years after when Mecca was conquered and all those deadly foes lay at the mercy of the Prophet, and the most humane of generals would have ordered their immediate execution, the compassionate victor not only did not utter a single word of reproach

but also granted them general amnesty saying: "There is no charge against you this day. Go, you are all free," history is unable to present another example of similar large-heartedness and magnanimity. Muhammad was indeed the most compassionate conqueror as described by the Zoroaster many centuries before his birth.

His name would be Astvut Ereta. This term has been derived from the root *Astv* which means to praise, to extol, to applaud. '*Sitodan*' of the modern Persian also gives the same meaning. The term Astvut Ereta, therefore, means the praised one which is an exact literal rendering of the Arabic term '*Muhammad*'. Thus Muhammad shall be the founder of an *Ummat.* He shall infuse new life into the world and establish true religion.

In the *Dasateer* published by Mulla Feroz with the help of several other Zoroastrian priests in the time of Nasiruddin Qachar, the Shah of Persia, in the Epistle of Sasan the first is a strikingly remarkable prophecy about the Holy Prophet in very clear words. The sum and substance of this prophecy is: "That when the Zoroastrian people will forsake their religion and will become dissolute, a man will rise in Arabia whose followers will conquer Persia and subjugate the arrogant Persians. Instead of worshipping fire in their own temples they will turn their faces towards the Ka'ba of Abraham which will be cleared of all idols. They (the followers of the Arabian Prophet) will be a mercy unto the world. They will become masters of Persia, Madain, Tas, Bulkh, the sacred places of the Zoroastrians and the neighbouring territories. This Prophet will be an eloquent man telling miraculous things."

Every word of this prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and in the subsequent history of Islam.

III. The Buddhist Scriptures.

When Gautama Buddha about 2,500 years ago, saw that the end of his earthly life was approaching, he spoke to his bosom companion Anand saying: 'Bring me a couch O Anand! for, I feel weakness and I want to lie down."

The Buddha lay on the couch under the cedar trees and spoke to Anand about his approaching end. With tears in his eyes Anand asked him who would, after his death teach and guide them, whereupon the Gautama Buddha replied :

"O Anand ! I am not the only nor the last Buddha who appeared on this earth ; in due time another Buddha will appear in this world, the Holy and enlightened one, endowed with heavenly wisdom and knowledge ; he will teach you eternal truths which I have taught you ; he will preach his religion, glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax, and glorious at the goal. He will proclaim a religious life wholly perfect and pure, such as I now proclaim. His disciples will number many thousand while mine number many hundred."

Anand said : "How shall we know him ?" The blessed one replied : "He will be known as Meitreya ....."
(From the Gospel of Buddha by Carus pp. 217-218)

The term *Maitreya* means literally "Mercy unto the nations" which is the exact translation of the Quranic description of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as "*Rahmatun-lil-Alamin.*" Addressing the Prophet The Most High God said in the Quran :

3. "And We have not sent thee (O Prophet !) but as a mercy to the nations of the world." (21 : 107)
4. "Certainly a messenger has come to you from among yourselves.... He is compassionate, merciful." (9 : 128)

There are many other passages in the Buddhist scripture which describe the attributes of this *Maitreya* and all of them apply to the Prophet in every detail, an elaborate study of which can be made with advantage in A.H. Vidhyarti's book entitled, *Muhammad in Parsi, Buddhist and Hindu Scriptures.*"

IV. The Jewish Scriptures.

(A) *The Lord makes a covenant with Abraham.*

"This is my covenant which ye shall keep : between me and you and thy seed after thee ; every man-child among you shall be circumcised." (*Genesis* 17 : 10)

The Lord blessed Abraham with a promise that his seed shall multiply exceedingly in numbers.

> 2 "And he brought him forth abroad and said : Look now towards heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them, and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be" (Gen : 16 : 5)

And the same promise was given to Hager his wife. (Gen : 21 : 18) And to Abraham the Lord further promised :

> "And I will make a nation of thee and I will bless them and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing and I will bless them that bless thee." (Gen : 12 : 2-3)

If we read this prophecy with the promise given to Hager, the meaning becomes perfectly clear. They reveal that a nation would be raised through Hager which would be blessed by the Lord. He would make the name of this nation great and he would bless them, for, they would bless Abraham. According to Reverend Dummelow, the promise to Hager "was fulfilled in the Arab race." (Dummelow's Commentary on the Holy Bible p. 25), for, Faran is still in possession of Bedouin Arabs, the descendents of Ishmael. (Gen : 17 : 21)

Abraham prayed for the posterity of Ismael (Gen : 17 : 18) and his prayer had been answered.

> "And as for Ismael, I have heard thee ; behold ! I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly ; twelve tribes shall he beget and I will make him a great nation." (Gen : 17 : 20)

God's promise to Abraham and Hager has three-fold meaning :-

1. A nation shall be raised from their progeny and God will bless them and make them great ;
2. God will bless those that bless him ; and
3. The descendents of Ismael will be made a great nation.

Abraham is described as the progenitor of the Arabs in the Quran :

5. "And the begetter (Abraham) and who he begot (the Arabs). (90 : 3)

And the prayer of Abraham regarding the progeny of Ismael is recorded in the Quran in these words :

6. "Our Lord !......And raise from our offspring a nation submitting to thee." (2 : 128)

The Quran sends peace on Abraham and so do all who read it.

7. "Peace be on Abrahim." (37 : 109)

And so did the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Prophet and the Muslims following the Sunnah say "Darud" at least eleven times in their five daily prayers in which Abraham and his descendents are mentioned. And lastly the Arabs after embracing Islam did become a great nation. In this way all the three promises mentioned above got fulfilled. The Quran adds further that Abraham and Ismael while praying for the raising of a nation from their progeny, prayed for the raising of a prophet from among them in these words :

8. "Our Lord ! And raise up in them an apostle from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them ; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." (2 : 129)

The birth of Muhammad and his being made a Prophet through whose work a great nation came into being was the fulfilment of the prayer of Abraham after God's acceptance of it.

(B) *The Prophecy of Moses.*

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee and will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deuteronomy 18 : 18)

Ismael and Isaac being sons of the same father (Abraham), were brothers among themselves. The descendents of the one would, therefore, be the brethren of the progeny of the other. The term "of their brethren" has been applied to the progeny of Hager and Ismael. This Prophet will be like unto Moses. The Quran bears witness of this in these words :

9. "Surely We have sent to you an apostle, a witness against you, as We had sent an apostle to Pharaoh." (73 : 15)

10. "And a witness (Musa) among the children of Israel has been a witness of one like him." (46 : 10)

According to the above prophecy of Moses God will put His words into the mouth of that Prophet, and indeed the whole Quran is the word of God put into the mouth of Muhammad. The Quran says :

11. "And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds." (26 : 192)

12. "The Holy Spirit has revealed it from your Lord in truth." (16 : 107)

13. "Nor does he (Muhammad) speak out of desire. It is naught but a revelation that is revealed. The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him." (53 : 3-5)

14. "The Beneficent Lord taught the Quran." (55 : 1-3)

15. "And thus have We revealed to thee the Quran in Arabic." (42 : 7)

16. "Say (O Muhammad !)... It is only a delivery from Allah and His message." (62 : 22-23)

According to the same prophecy he will address all nations. The Quran says :

17. "Blessed is He who sent down the Distinction upon His servant that he may be a warner to all nations." (25 : 1)

18. "It is nothing but a Reminder to all nations." (6 : 91)

19. Say O Prophet ! Surely I am an Apostle of Allah to you all." (7 : 158)

And God will command that Prophet to deliver His message. The Holy Quran says :

20. "O thou who are clothed ! Arise and warn." (74 : 1-2)

21. "O Apostle ! Declare what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord." (5 : 67)

22. "Say (O Muhammad !) My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah the Lord of the worlds. No associate has He, and this I am commanded and I am the first of those who submit." (6 : 163-164)

Further on in the same book of Deuteronomy ch : 33 : 2 it is said :

"The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them. He shined forth from mount Faran and he came with ten thousand of saints and from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

History bears testimony that on the occasion of the conquest of Mecca when the Holy Prophet descended from mount Faran which stands close to Mecca, he was accompanied by ten thousand of his saintly companions. The *Shari'a* is the fiery law that he promulgated for the maintenance of peace and justice in the land.

There are more than a dozen prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures foretelling the advent of the great world-teacher Muhammad which requires the space of a separate book, but we shall here limit ourselves to only four of them.

(C) *The Prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah.*

"Behold, a woman shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat. Associate yourselves O ye people! (against him) and ye shall be broken into pieces, and give ear all ye of far countries, gird yourselves against him and ye shall be broken into pieces ; take counsel together against him it shall come to naught ; speak the word, and it shall not stand ; for God is with us." (Isaiah 8 : 9-10)

" (He will) bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples." (Isaiah 8 : 16)

In this prophecy the Hebrew word Haalma (woman) is translated as virgin to make the prophecy applicable to Jesus. But Peaks in his commentary of the Bible p. 442 says : "The

rendering "virgin" is unjustifiable . the word employed here means a young woman of marriagable age....It has therefore no reference to the birth of Jesus...the name Immanuel means "God is with us" and not "God with us" There is no reference in it to any incarnation of God."

The Holy Prophet was a posthumous child of Abdullah. His mother died when he was six years old. Thus in his tender years he was deprived of both of his parents. His usual and staple food consisted of barley, bread, dates and milk. Abu Daud the Traditionist records that the Holy Prophet used to take delight in eating butter, and Bukhari, another Traditionist, records a similar tradition regarding his liking for honey.

It is a fact of history that the Quraish did not only conspire against him but actually girded themselves to warfare and three times they attempted to crush the Muslims at Badr, Uhud and Madinah but were broken to pieces.

The word Immanuel means "God is with us," and applies to Muhammad only, for the Quran records his memorable words in this passage :

23. "Allah certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion : "Grieve not, surely Allah is with us." (9 : 40)

The Prophet believed in the ultimate triumph of his cause and his faith that "God is with him" brought victory after victory to him. Although on each occasion the odds were against him, his enemies were 'broken into pieces'.

According to the above prophecy the Prophet will bind up the testimony and seal the law. This also applies to the Holy Prophet, for in his life-time only he took every possible measure to preserve the Quran in its pristine purity and he sealed the law. The Holy Quran bears testimony to this in these verses :

24. "He is the Apostle of Allah and the seal of the prophets." (33 : 40)

25. "This day have I perfected for you your religion and

completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5 : 3)

In the Holy Prophet Muhammad the manifestation of Divine Will was fully accomplished. The law of the Quran meets the requirements of all ages and all countries. That is why he sealed the law saying "There will be no prophet after me."

(D) *The Second Prophecy of Isaiah*

"Behold My *servant* whom I uphold, my elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put in my spirit upon him. He shall not *fail nor be discouraged* till he have set judgement in earth. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit." (Isaiah 42 : 1, 4 : 11)

(a) According to this prophecy who is given the title of the "*Servant*" of God ? The Holy Quran describes the Holy Prophet in these words :

26. "Blessed is He who sent down the Distinction upon His *servant* that he may be a warner to the world." (25 : 1)

27. "And He revealed to His *servant* what He revealed." (53 : 10)

(b) He will be an elect of God with whom God will be pleased. He is reported to have said : "Verily Allah created the creation and made me among the best of them." (Bukhari)

(c) That Prophet will not fail nor will he be discouraged and he shall accomplish his mission and thus shall deliver the judgement of God on earth. The Quran says :

28. "Your companion (Muhammad) does not err nor shall he fail." (53 : 2)

History proves and even the Christian biographers of the Prophet have admitted that he was the most successful of all prophets and religious personalities. (Encyclopaedia Brittanica Art : Quran.) Because he was ordained to be successful in his earthly mission he was to have :

29. "A favour never to be cut off." (68 : 3)

Regarding his courage of heart a critic like Muir had to admit:

"We search in vain through the pages of profane history for a parallel to the struggle in which for thirteen years the Prophet of Arabia, in the face of discouragement and threats, rejection and persecution, retained thus his faith unswerving, preached repentance and denounced God's wrath against his God-less fellow-citizens. Surrounded by a little band of faithful men and women he met insults, menace and danger with a lofty and patient faith in the future." (Muir's *Life of Mohamet*)

In the preceding verse the Holy Prophet is invited to judge people "By what Allah has revealed."

That he completed the mission on earth entrusted to him no one can deny. Idolatry vanished, the doctrine of the Unity and absolute perfection of God became a living principle in the hearts and lives of his followers and submission to the Divine Will became the governing rule of their life. Nor were social virtues wanting. Universal brotherhood was inculcated and infanticide proscribed, orphans were protected, slaves emancipated, women given their status in society, usury, intoxicating drinks and gambling prohibited. Well may Muhammad and he alone say on his farewell pilgrimage: "O Lord ! I have delivered Thy message and have accomplished my work."

(d) "The inhabitants of the wilderness, the cities and villages of Kedar will sing his praises."

Kedar refers to the tribes of Arabia. The prophet Jeremiah said that Faran will be the place where Ismael shall live. (Jer : 49 : 7) and Faran according to Biblical geography is in Hijaz. It is evident therefore that this prophecy could apply in all its details only to the Holy Prophet.

(E) *The Prophecy of the Apostle Malachi.*

"But you are departed out of the way : you have caused many to stumble at the law : you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of the hosts." (Mal. 2 : 8)

"Behold ! I will send My *Messenger* and he shall prepare the way for Me." (Mal. 3 : 1)

The two parts of the above prophecy taken together apply to the Holy Prophet who did not belong to the house of Jacob and was explicitly addressed as the "*Messenger of God.*"

The above-quoted prophecies from the Jewish Scriptures, we believe, are enough to convince our readers that the Most High God gave the Jews sufficient material to recognise in the person of the Holy Prophet the promised world-teacher of their Scriptures. The Quran therefore was perfectly right when it said :

30. "Those whom we have given the Book recognise him (Muhammad) as they recognise their sons and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know it." (2 : 446)

and therefore it openly admonished them in these words :

31. "Believe in what I have revealed verifying that which is with you (i.e. the prophecies in your books) and be not the first to deny it." (2 : 41)

The shrewd Jews at Madinah remonstrated with their co-religionists who carelessly talked about these prophecies with their Muslim friends, warning them that they would benefit Islam by such disclosures. But truth is truth in the sight of God whether they revealed it or concealed it. This behaviour of the Jews is exposed by the Quran in these words :

32. "And when they are alone with one another they say : "Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they (the Muslims) may contend with you by this before your Lord ? Do you not then understand ?" Do they not know that Allah knows what they keep secret and what they make known " (2 : 76-77)

Before the appearance of the Prophet, the Jews of Madinah expected that when the Prophet, spoken of in their Scriptures, would make his appearance, he would make them victorious over their disbelieving opponents according to Deuteronomy 28 : 1-2 which states :

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shouldst hearken diligently unto the voice of thy Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I commanded thee this day that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth and all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee if thou hearken unto the voice of thy Lord thy God."

This fact is referred to in the Quran in these words :-

33. "And aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they recognised, they rejected it. So Allah's curse is on the unbelievers. Evil is that for which they have sold their souls—that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of spite that Allah should send down of His Grace (of Prophethood) on whomsoever of His servants He pleased." (2 : 89-90)

On the other hand, instead of believing in the Prophet they joined his enemies the idolatrous Arabs and conspired against him and his followers. This mischievous attitude of theirs is again referred to in these words :

34. "Had they believed in Allah and their Prophet (Moses) and what was revealed to him, they would not have taken them (the idolatrous Arabs) for friends but most of them are transgressors. (5 : 81)

V. **The Christian Scriptures.**

The Jews were expecting a prophet like Moses before the advent of Jesus. When John the Baptist appeared they asked him : "Art thou Elias ? And he said I am not. Art thou that prophet ? And he answered. No." (Math. 3 : 11)

St. John further tells us that the Jews further questioned John the Baptist :

"Why baptiseth thou then, if thou be not the Christ nor Elias neither *that prophet*." (John 1 : 25)

"And he answered: I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance but he that cometh after me is mightier than I whose shows I am not worthy to bear : he will baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Math 3 : 11)

The Christians apply this prophecy to Jesus, but there is no record in the Bible that he baptised his disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and his church does not make use of fire when initiating people in its fold. Therefore the allusion cannot refer to the son of Mary who was his (John's) own cousin and contemporary and who, according to Bible records, received baptism at the hands of John himself.

This baptism with fire and the Holy Ghost is implied in the following verse of the Quran :-

35. "(Receive) the baptism of Allah and who is better than Allah in baptising and Him do we serve." (2 : 138)

Baptism or the colour of God is Islam which means complete surrender of our will to the Will of God. To bring- complete death on our passions and desires is the baptism with fire. If we succeed in doing so, we are in the position to imbue ourselves with Divine attributes, this being baptism with the Holy Ghost.**

After John the Baptist Jesus confirmed their belief by announcing the future advent of "*That Prophet*" whom he called according to the Greek translation "*Paraclete*". He said :

1. "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete that he may be with you for ever." (John 14 : 16)
2. "But the" Comforter which is the holy spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatever I have said unto you." (John 14 : 26)
3. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away ; if I go not away the Paraclete will not come to you...and when he is come, he will reprove

** For a further clarification of the subject of Baptism refer to my book "*Lessons from the Stories of the Quran*" under John the Baptist.

the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement." (John 16 : 7-8)

4. "I have yet many things to say, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you unto all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you the things to come. He shall glorify me." (John 16 : 12-14).

In no. 1 above, the Greek word *Paraclete* is translated as "Comforter", in no. 2. Wastenfalls, a commentator of the Bible, explains that the word used by Jesus was *Mauhamana* (Aramaic) and in Hebrew it was *Mauhammanna,* both meaning "the praised." In the sister language Arabic the word would be Muhammad or Ahmed which are derived from the same root "Hamd" which means praising.

In the Gospel of Barnabas which was accepted and read upto the Gelasian Decree, a detail reference to which can be seen in my book *"Tenets of Islam"* wherein under the heading "The Story of the Bible" is recorded a saying of Jesus thus :—

"Verily I say unto you that the *Messenger of God* is a splendour that shall give gladness to nearly all that God has made. O Muhammad ! God be with thee and may He make me worthy to untie thy shoe latchets ; for obtaining this I shall be a great prophet and holy one of God." (Barnabas 163 : 180)

In another place in the same Gospel it is recorded :

"The disciples asked : O Master ! Who shall that man be of whom thou speaketh, who shall come into the world ? Jesus answered : He is Muhammad, *the Messenger of God."* (the translation is by Laura Regg)

The presence of the name *Muhammad* is really explained by the Aramaic equivalent *Mauhamana* or the Greek word *Paraclete* which John's translator used in his Gospel. Jesus had thus foretold in unambiguous terms the future advent of the *Paraclete*, i.e. *Mauhamana* or *Muhammad*, the Messenger of God

Was the Holy Prophet Muhammad the *Paraclete* foretold by Jesus ? The Holy Quran says :

36. "Those who believe in the Messenger Prophet, the *Unni* whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel ...and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these shall be the successful." (7 : 157)

The Comforter foretold by Jesus was also to be the spirit of Truth who was to glorify Jesus (John 16 : 12-14). The Holy Quran refers to Muhammad as the Truth in these words :

37. "Say : Truth has come and falsehold has vanished ; surely falsehood was bound to vanish." (17 : 81)

And the Holy Prophet did glorify Jesus by denouncing as utterly false all those calumnies which were levelled by the Jews against Jesus and his mother Mary. The Quran refers to this prophecy of Jesus in these words :

38. "And when Jesus son of Mary said ; O children of Israel ! Surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you verifying that which is before me of the Torah, and giving the good news of the Messenger who will come after me, his name being *Ahmed*." (61 : 6)

Blessed are those who listen reverently to the precious words spoken by their sages, saints, and prophets, and rally round and repose their faith in the promised Prophet Muhammad, Ahmed, the praised, (Peace and the blessings of God be upon him).

2

Name, Ancestry, Birthplace, and Time of Advent of the Prophet

The Quran is not a biography of the Prophet nor his reminiscences. Neither is it arranged chronologically nor subjectwise, except for a few chapters. It is a rainbow refulgence of light in words addressed to Muhammad by the Most High God. If one seeks to study the mind of Muhammad from the Quran, he will be disappointed because the Quran has not come from the mind of Muhammad. He could not even wield the pen. No doubt it has come to us through the medium of the Prophet as we could not receive it otherwise. Muhammad himself had doubted his new experience; and what is more, this doubt of his was not kept secret but expressed in the very Quran for which he was charged of fabrication by his opponents.

39. "If thou art in doubt of that which We have sent down unto thee, ask those who read the Book before thee. Verily the truth has come to thee from thy Lord. Be not of those who are in doubt and be not of those who say the signs of Allah are lies, or thou wilt be of those who suffer loss." (10 : 94)

40. "O thou Apostle ! Preach what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord, and if thou do it not, thou hast not preached His message and Allah will protect thee from men, for, Allah guides not those who disbelieve." (5:67)

41. "Do they say : he has forged a lie? Say : If I have forged it, you cannot obtain for me aught from Allah. He knows best what you utter concerning it. He is witness enough between me and you, and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (46:8)

42. "Be not in doubt about it : verily it is the truth from thy Lord, though most men do not believe. Who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah. They shall be set before thy Lord and the witnesses shall say : there it is who lied against Allah." (11:17-19)

Thus the Quran itself denies that it is the invention of the Prophet's mind. More of this will be discussed later on. We will therefore take up only the incidents of the Prophet's life which are directly or indirectly connected with him as told in the Quran.

a) NAME

The Quran calls the Prophet by the name of Muhammad in four passages of the Quran. They are as follows :

43. "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." (48:29)

44. "And as for those who believe and do good and believe in what has been revealed to Muhammad, and it is the very truth from their Lord." (47:2)

45. "And Muhammad is no more than a messenger." (3:143)

46. "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men but he is Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets." (33:40)

He is also called Ahmed according to the prophecy of Jesus already discussed in the previous chapter:

47. "...giving the good news of the Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmed." (61:6)

Besides these names there are several other attributive names scattered over the pages of the Quran which indicate his functions as the Messenger of God such as *Nazeer* (Warner), *Basheer* (Given of good news), *Shaheed* (Witness), *Siraj* (light-giving lamp), *An Nabi* (the Prophet), *Ar-Rasool* (the messenger), *Al-Abd* (the servant), *Rahmatuh-lil-Alameen* (Mercy for the worlds), *Khatamun-nabi-een* (the seal of the prophets) and so on, the list mounting up to ninety nine such names.

b) ANCESTRY

The Ancestry of the Holy Prophet goes upto Abraham through Ismael as is evidenced from the prayer of both father and son given in the Quran :

48. "Our Lord! And raise up in them (our progeny) an Apostle from among them." (2 : 129)

According to this verse the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that he was the answer to the prayer of his father Abraham.

c) BIRTH - PLACE

The place where Abraham settled Ismael is stated in these words of the Quran :

49. "O our Lord! Surely, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy sacred House." (14 : 37)

And this Sacred House, the House of God, the Ka'ba, the first House of Prayer in the world was in *Bakka* otherwise called Mecca. The Quran calls this city "The city of safety and security."

50. "Most surely the first House appointed for men for prayer is the one at Bakka, blessed and a guidance for the people of the world." (3:95)

The mantras in the *Atherva Veda* describe the Ka'ba in the words given below corroborating exactly to the history of the Ka'ba as well as to its structure. It states :

"The Ka'ba is a memorial commemorating the memory of a great sacrifice. It has always been free from subjugation. Its inhabitants get plenty to eat: its walls are not straightly built; It is a place which is full of spiritual life ; it has nine gates and eight circuits. There are three pillars and three beams in it; it is the place where Brahma (referring to Abraham) came from another land and made it his abode for sometime and built the House of God there." (Vide *Atherva Veda* X 2-26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33)

Besides the Vedas the prophet David refers to the House of God by the name of Bakka. In the *Psalms* we find :

"O Lord of hosts! My king, and my God! Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House; they will be still praising Thee; Saleh. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose hearts are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of *Baca* make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." (*Psalms*, 84 : 4-6)

The following analysis can be made from the above Psalm :

(a) The House of God to which David refers was no other than the one at Bekka, for, the Holy temple at Jerusalem had not been built by that time, and God lived in Zion.

(b) The prophet David was awaiting the Divine commandment to invade Palestine and in order to seek blessing from the House of God that was built by the Patriarch Abraham, he came to the valley of Bakka.

(c) The name of the valley is *Baca* which in Hebrew is written and pronounced as Bacah.

(d) The dwellers of this valley will always praise their Lord.

(e) 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee" clearly refers to the Prophet, who, though an orphan, weak and friendless, over-came his mighty foes with God's Grace and taking strength from Him.

(f) In the desert of Mecca the well of *zamzam* is another sign of God blessing this land.

(g) "Blessed one" and "going from strength to strength" is the translation of the Quranic words "Mubarak" occurring in verse 3:95 quoted above.

(h) Appearing before God in Zion refers to the annual pilgrimage at Mecca.

d) THE TIME OF ADVENT

The appearance of the Prophet was after the time of Moses and Jesus which is hinted at in the following verse:

51. "O people of the Book! Indeed Our Apostle has come to you after a cessation of the apostles, lest you say, there came not to us a giver of good news or a warner." (5:19)

Then in the chapter entitled *"The Elephant"* we find that Mecca was invaded by Abraha, the Christian viceroy of Abyssinia in Yemen and this was the year 570 A. C. according to historians, in which year the Prophet was also born.

According to a verse of the Quran :

52. "Until he attains his maturity and reaches forty years." (46:15)

The spiritual maturity of man is usually attained at the age of forty. Prophethood is the highest spiritual gift that can be vouchsafed to a human being and, therefore, we can safely infer that the Prophet must have received his call at the age of forty, and this is the age confirmed by all reports of the Prophet's Traditions and the biographers of the Prophet also give 610 A. C. as the year of his call to Prophethood.

Now at this juncture a little digression may be allowed if we indulge in picturing the situation in which the advent of the Holy Prophet took place according to his biographers. The period preceding his advent has been designated as the "Dark Age" or the time of ignorance. The Holy Quran calls it "Al- Jahiliyya" and describes the prevailing corruption in the following words:

53. "Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done so that they may return." (30:41)

History bears evidence to the truth of these words. Before the advent of the Holy Prophet corruption prevailed in most of the world. In almost all countries people had at the time fallen into a state of spiritual and moral bankruptcy. The empire of Rome was sunk deep in barbarism. In Asia rank immorality was the order of the day. A great part of India presented the same horrid picture of the then existing society. Persia and China, too, were in the same plight, and this was due to the fact that centuries had elapsed since the known period of reform, and whatever reformation had been previously brought about had become extinct because of the divine message having been tampered with.

A modern writer having studied the different systems of religion and the civilizations that grew up therefrom has come exactly to the same conclusion. In his *Emotions on the Basis of Civilization*, Denison writes:

"In the fifth and the sixth centuries, the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilizations possible had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place...... It seemed then that the great civilization that it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order were unknown ...... The new sanctions created by Christianity were working divisions and destructions instead of unity and order ...... Civilization like a gigantic tree whose foliage had over-reached the world ...... stood tottering ......rotted to the core......It was among these people that the man (reference is to the Holy Prophet) was born who was to unite the whole known world of east and west."

The condition of Arabia was even worse than obtained elsewhere. It was immersed in the cimmerian darkness of

religious ignorance, moral depravity and spiritual turpitude. The Arabs were wholly abandoned to the gratification of their carnal desires, knew no God, no prophet, no law, worshipping idols and images, sticks and stones. They were care-free, sceptical, materialistic. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die", was the epicurean tone of the majority of the pre-Islamic poems of the Arabs. They had a wreckless passion for wine, women and gambling. They committed adultery and theft and treated their women as mere chattel, oppressed the orphans, and misappropriated their properties and indulged in robbery, murder, and infanticide. Such was the condition of the Arabian society when the first appeal of the Holy Quran was made to them.

And what was the miracle that took place during a short period of twenty-three years of the Prophet's missionary work?

The shakles of their ignorance were broken, and their hearts became illuminated. Their vices were replaced by virtues and their wickedness by righteousness. Their passion for wine, women and gambling was changed into the passion for prayer and fasting. Their nightly carousals were abandoned in favour of vigils and prayers and their morning bouts were changed into glorification and thanks-giving. From the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation they were raised to the highest pinnacle of spiritual eminence. From wandering nomads and marauding bandits they left their indelible print on the civilization of the world. From the dregs and scum of society they became the teachers and educators of mankind. Surely such a marvellous change could not be effected save by a true Messenger of God, the acknowledged last world-teacher of all the scriptures of the world,

3

The Prophet Muhammad— A Human Being

The spurious literature piled up during the past centuries around the great founders of religions prior to the advent of Muhammad has turned them into legendary and mythological figures and it is now almost impossible to discriminate the facts from the fiction in the records that are available to us about their lives and teachings. The reason was that these teachers of humanity or their immediate followers did not take the precaution to preserve what they preached. Also their over-credulous followers of a later age, while writing about them paid no attention to the authenticity or historicity of what they wrote and drew upon their imaginations and predilections, with the result that the scriptures that go by their name have failed to give us a reliable and clear picture of these great personages and their life-work. Professor Nicholson in his "*Literary History of the Arabs*", (p. 141) says:

> "With the appearance of Muhammad the almost impenetrable veil thrown over the preceding ages is lifted and we find ourselves on the solid ground of historical tradition."

The Quran refers to this state of affairs regarding the per-Islamic Scriptures in these words:

54. "And most surely there is a party of them which lie about the Book, that you may consider it to be a part of the Book, while it is not a part of the Book, and they say: It is from Allah, while it is not from Allah, and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know it." (3:77)

55. "Woe then to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say: this is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price ; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn." (2:79)

Among all the religious leaders of the world it is an exclusive characteristic of the Arabian Prophet that all through the past fourteen centuries his figure has stood out unique in human history in as much as the world does not know as much of any person as of him. All the details contained in the pages of the Quran and the *Hadith* literature regarding his personal traits and his teachings embrace all that is worth knowing to understand him and the religion he preached. In this connection Bosworth Smith writes in his *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, (pp. 14-15):

"In Mohamadanism everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history. We know as much of Muhammad as we do even of Luther and Milton. The mythical, the legendary, the supernatural is almost wanting in the original Arab authorities ... Nobody here is the dupe of himself or of others; there is the full light of day upon all that light can reach at all. We know of the external history of Muhammad ...... while for his internal history after his mission had been proclaimed, we have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation ...... on the substantial authority of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt."

If all the literature that has accumulated during the past so many centuries about the Prophet Muhammad and his Mission and produced by competent authorities, both Muslim

and non-Muslim, is obliterated and only the Quran is left intact, even then, this book is enough to satisfy an enquirer in respect of all the basic information that may be required about him and his teachings.

The first and foremost thing that the Quran has prominently dealt with is the fact of the Prophet being a man. Before the revelation of the Quran it was an admitted principle of belief among the polytheists that God Himself takes the form of man to reform the world and that all the great founders of religion were supernatural beings. This belief had taken so deep a root that whenever a prophet was raised to preach the Divine message people wondered how a man with all his human infirmities like their own could ever be sent as their guide. On this plea they belied the prophets from time immemorial, when Noah came to his people with the Divine message it was said:

56. "He is nothing but a mortal like yourselves who desires that he may have superiority over you, and if Allah had pleased He could certainly have sent down angels. We have not heard of this from our fathers of yore." (23:24)

When the prophet Hud was sent to his people with a Divine message he also met with a similar criticism.

57. "He is nothing but a mortal like yourselves, eating of what you eat from, and drinking of what you drink, and if you obey a mortal like yourselves, then most surely you will be the losers." (23:33-34)

When Moses and Aaron approached Pharoah and his people

58. "They said: What! Shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves while their people are our slaves." (23:47)

The same objection was raised against the Prophet of Mecca who, after leading a quiet life among them for forty years suddenly declared to his people that he was a Messenger of God sent to reclaim them.

59. "They say: What sort of an Apostle is this who eats food and walks through the streets. Why has not an angel been sent down with him for a warner, or why

has not a treasure bestowed on him or why has he not a garden that he may eat out of it." (25:7-8)

The prophets were, therefore, rejected on the plea that they were subject to the same laws of Nature in their human requirements as other men. This objection would no doubt have been valid against any one who claimed to be God. but as prophets were human beings they had to be subject to the same laws of Nature as governed other human beings. No one can be a model for men who is not himself a human being, for, only a man can show men the way by walking on it himself, thereby showing how they can avoid falling a prey to the frailties of human nature. Hence a Divine incarnation of God or God in human body or even an angel can no more serve as a model to men than a man can be a model to a horse or a dog. We want a mortal man to show us how to avoid the pitfalls with which we as mortals are surrounded. A teacher for mankind should be one who shares their nature, mingles in their life, is acquainted with all their infirmities and sympathises with their sorrows and participates in their joys. In reply to their objections the Quran makes the following remarks:

60. "What kept men from belief when guidance come to them was nothing but this: they said: Hast God sent a man like us to be His Apostle ? Say: If there were settled on earth angels walking about in peace and quite, We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for an apostle." (17:94-95)

The same principle is further clarified in these words :

61. "The apostles whom We sent before thee were also men to whom We sent Our revelations. If you do not know this, ask of those who possess the Book, nor did give them bodies that ate no food nor were they exempt from death." (21:7-8)

62. "We did send apostles before thee and gave them wives and children " (13:38)

Then the Holy Prophet was commanded to announce in unequivocal terms:

63. "Say (O Prophet !) I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is one God." (18:110)

These expositions have closed the door for the greatest of men to be attributed with Divinity. It is also pointed out that the miracles that the prophets perform do not invest them with Divine attributes, for, they are performed with the power and permission given to them by God.

64. "They say: we shall not believe in thee until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or until thou have a garden of date trees and vine and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst carrying abundant water, or thou cause the sky to fall on us in pieces as thou sayest (will happen) against us, or thou bring God and the angels before us face to face, or thou have a house adorned with gold or thou ascend into heavens and even then we shall not believe in thee until thou send down to us a book that we could read. Say (O Prophet !) Glory be to my Lord! I am nothing but a man - only an apostle." (17:90-93)

An apostle of God is a man at the command of God and not to satisfy the disingenius whims and fancies of unbelievers. Miracles greater than any that their foolish fancies could imagine were performed by the prophets before Muhammad and yet the spiteful and the jealous remained callous and void of faith. The Quran rejects such wrong conceptions about the ability of religious teachers performing miracles by themselves and no prophet can accomplish anything without the assistance and permission of God.

65. "It is not in the power of an apostle to bring a sign except by Allah's permission." (14:11)

66. "It is not for us that we should bring you an authority except by Allah's permission." (14:11)

The Prophet is incapable of even protecting himself from harm if God wills otherwise. The Quran plainly states:

67. "If Allah toucheth thee with affliction there is none to take it off but He and if He visit thee with good, then He has power over all things." (6:17)

68. "Say: I do not control for myself any harm or any benefit except what Allah pleases." (10:49)

69. "Say: I do not say to you I have with me the treasures of Allah nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me." (6:50)

70. "Say: Had I known the unseen I would have had much good and no evil would have touched me. I am nothing but a warner and the giver of good news to a people who believe." (7:188)

These are not the words which a pretender would utter. The words are those of an honest man, who, without making any personal pretensions preaches truth in all sincerity. The Holy Prophet is repeatedly made to disclaim any personal control over good or evil, so that he offers no low temptations to his followers. Truth must be accepted for its own sake and not in the hope of any worldly gain or for fear of worldly loss.

The Holy Prophet has no hand in the reckoning of good and evil or in chastising or rewarding anyone. His business is only to deliver the message and guide those who accept him to the straight path.

71. "Thou art not responsible for any reckoning of theirs nor are they answerable for any reckoning of thine." (6:52)

72. "Only the delivery of the message is incumbent on thee while calling them to account is Our business." (13 : 4)

73. "Surely thou canst not make the dead to hear and thou canst not make the deaf to hear the call when they turn their backs, nor canst thou be a guide to the blind out of their error. Thou canst make to hear only those who believe and submit." (27 : 80-81)

74. "Whoever goes aright, he goes aright for his own sake and whoever goes astray, then say : I am only one of the warners." (27 : 92)

It is also pointed out that whatever eminence the Prophet is given is all due to his perfect submission to God and to his willing obedience to His laws. Whatever communications he

gets from above, he delivers it to men below and does not mix with it anything of his own.

75. "If thou follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, then thou shouldst most surely be among the unjust." (2 : 145)

76. "Say : It does not beseem me that I should change it myself. I follow naught but what is revealed to me. Surely I fear the chastisement of a mighty day if I disobey my Lord." (10 : 15)

These words do not imply that the Prophet meant to say that he did not change the Quran for fear of punishment. They are spoken to show how true he himself was to revelation, translating every one of its precepts into practice.

Another important feature of the Prophet's Mission which is repeatedly announced is that his claim as a prophet is not unique but only similar to that of all other prophets who had been coming into the world since its beginning upto his own times among all the nations in all the ages. Divine guidance through the prophets is not the exclusive privilege of any particular nation. It had been provided to all the nations of the world and in every community were born such guides who directed their people to the right path, the path of righteousness, and warned them of the consequences of disobedience to the laws of life, physical, moral and spiritual.

77. "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them." (35 : 24)

78. "And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle saying : Serve Allah and shun the devil." (16 : 36)

That Muhammad is also one of such prophets is declared in several passages in the Quran.

79. "This is a warner of the warners of old." (53 : 36)

80. "Most surely thou art one of the apostles." (36 : 3)

81. "Say : I am not the first of the apostles and I do not know what will be done with me or with you. I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me and I am nothing but a plain warner." (46 : 9)

The prophets are all mortals. None shall remain forever in this world.

82. "Surely thou shalt die and they too shall surely die." (39 : 30)

83. "And Muhammad is no more than an apostle. The apostles before him have passed away." (3 : 143)

And this is not all. It is specifically pointed out that belief in the great prophets of Israel is an article of faith with a Muslim along with a belief in all the messengers of God sent to the world in general.

84. "Say : We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Ismail and Ishaq and Yaqub and the tribes and in that which was given to Musa and Esau and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him we submit." (2 : 136)

All these verses point out to the broad fact that every nation was given a prophet. This great truth which had remained hidden for thousands of years from the wisest men of the world had dawned upon an unlettered Arabian who could not have known what all nations then existed and what scriptures they possessed. The belief in the Divine mission of all the prophets alone could form the basis of the universality of a Divine message to the whole of mankind. Only he who had the breadth of mind to recognise truth in all could unite all men in one religion and make them pay homage to one Holy book.

4

The Prophet Muhammad's Mission

After determining the Prophet's right place in the brotherhood of prophets, the Quran describes in detail the purpose and the wide implications of his Mission.

85. "Certainly, Allah conferred a great favour upon the believers when he raised among them an Apostle from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them and instructing them in scripture and wisdom, while before that they were in manifest error." (3 : 163)

The Prophet was charged not only to deliver the message of God but to show by his personal example how its tenets could be put into practice. He was to purify his followers by making them renounce all evil ways and customs and superstitions and to instil in them a passion to acquire wisdom and knowledge and to infuse in them love for high morals that could build up their character. He was to create in them a sense of understanding of the purpose of the Book of God with all its spiritual implications and to help them develop all their inner faculties so as to bring them in harmony with the law of life as ordained by God.

How far he succeeded in carrying out these duties can be judged from what he made of his followers. He made a hopelessly degenerated people of the world the best models of righteousness.

The second feature of the Prophet's Mission was the perfection of guidance.

86. "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as religion." (5 : 3)

He was appointed to bring religion to perfection so that there may be no further need of any prophet to come after him. All that was needed for the moral and spiritual uplift of mankind was expounded through him ; all the evils that should be expunged from social life were almost expurgated by his efforts ; all the refinements of individual character and all the amenities of collective life were accorded full scope to develop under his wise leadership, and through his precepts and examples it was made possible for all ages and climes to constitute human life in harmony with the universal will of God.

The third feature of his Mission was to expose the nature of all untruths that had crept into the religion of God among the followers of previous prophets and to eliminate all those impediments, the outcome of untruths, that stood in the way of approaching God, so that the straight path, the only path to reach God may become clearly discernable.

87. "By Allah, most certainly We sent apostles to nations before thee but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them ; so, he is their patron today and they shall have a painful chastisement. And We have revealed to thee the Book with the sole purpose that thou mayest make clear to them that about which they differ and that it should be a guide and mercy for a people who believe." (16 : 63-64)

In these verses it is pointed out that the Prophet is given the Book (the Quran) that he should bring about unity among the jarring sects of different religions, for, the gospel of Unity

while preaching belief in one true God leads also to the Unity of mankind ; that the Quran should be guide to right conduct and that it should show the path of repentance and salvation and thus be a great mercy to erring humanity. Particularly the Jews and the Christians are addressed in these words.

88. "O people of the Book ! Indeed Our apostle has come to you, making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book, and passing over much. Indeed there has come to you light and a perspicuous Book from Allah wherewith Allah guides him who seeks His pleasure into the ways of peace and safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the path that is straight." (5 : 15-16)

There are many truths which the Jews and the Christians had lost, their scriptures not having remained free from corruption. Ordinances which were of permanent value in the previous books were re-stated in the Quran and others which were suitable only to local requirements of different countries and not of universal application were omitted.

The fourth feature of the Prophet's Mission was to warn the transgressors and to give tidings of God's mercy to the believers and to make them follow the path of life chalked out by God.

89. "O Prophet ! Truly We have sent thee as a testifier (of all truths) and as a bearer of good news and as a warner and as one inviting towards Allah by His permission and a lamp spreading light." (33 : 45-46)

The Prophet in the above quotation is shown in five capacities.

(1) He came as a testifier of all the spiritual truths which had been obscured by ignorance and superstition or by the manipulations of different sects. He did not come to establish a new religion. He came to teach the same old religion free from all the alloy of humans.

(2) He came to proclaim the glad tidings of the mercy of God to those who may have transgressed, provided they believe in reform and live a good life.

(3) He also came as a warner to those who are heedless of their future to tell them that this life is transitory and that there is a future life which will bear out the results of their present deeds.

(4) He come as one who had a right to invite all men to the way of God by the permission and authority given to him by God. This is expressly said lest people may deify him as they had done other prophets before him.

(5) He came as a light-spreading lamp to illuminate the whole world with the light he was deputed.

The fifth feature of the Prophets Mission was to enjoin good and forbid evil, to fix the limits of lawful and unlawful upon everything connected with life, and to make people free of all restrictions save God's.

90. "Who enjoins them good and forbids them evil and makes lawful to them the good things, and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them the burden and the shackles, which were upon them. So, as for those who believe in him and honour him, and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that shall be successful." (7 : 157)

The sixth feature of his Mission was to establish justice in the land and deliver judgement according to the law of God irrespective of how it affected friends or foes.

91. "Surely, We have revealed the Book to thee with truth that thou mayest judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught thee, and be not an advocate of those who betray their trust." (4 : 105)

The seventh feature of the Prophet's Mission was to establish the religion of God in such a way that all the aspects of human life be governed by its laws.

92. "He it is who sent His Apostle with the guidance and true religion that He may make it supercede all other religions." (48 : 28)

This prophecy of the ascendancy of Islam over all other religions is a prophecy which extends into the distant future. Arabia saw its fulfilment in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. Its supersession over all the world religions will at last be established and Islam shall be the universal religion.

And last of all the Prophet's Mission was to be all-comprehensive and final.

93. "We have not sent thee but to all mankind as a bearer of good news and as a warner, but most men do not know. (34 : 28)

94. "Say. O people! I am the apostle of Allah sent towards you all by Him whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; there is no god but He; He gives life and causes death; therefore believe in Allah and his Apostle the Ummi prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him, so that you may find the right way. (7 : 158)

95. "We have not sent thee but as mercy to the worlds." (21 : 107)

96. "Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion (*al-Furqan*) (of right and wrong) upon His Servant that he might be a warner to the world." (25 : 1)

97. "Say: This Quran has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and to whomsoever it reaches." (6 : 19)

98. "It (the Quran) is naught but a reminder to the world, for him among you who pleases to go straight." (81 : 27-28)

Every prophet was sent to one people, his mission being limited to the reformation and unification of one nation. But Muhammad (peace be upon him), came to unite all the nations of the world into one and to eliminate all differences of nationality, race and colour. That he was successful in this mission the history of Islam in the subsequent years testifies to the full. As soon as a man enters the fold of Islam his geographical distinction becomes secondary before the

wider conception of humanity for which Islam opens out his mind. It may, therefore, be said that a Muslim's nationality is universal as Islam is the religion of any humanity, not the religion of a particular nation.

The universality of the Prophet's Mission really dated from the first message he received, because in the opening chapter, which is undoubtedly the earliest revelation. Allah is spoken of not as the Lord of Arabs but as the Lord of the whole world.

In vain, would any one search the pages of other sacred book to discover a message of this nature.

The last verse quoted above shows in a most concise form that the guidance of the Quran is open to all who have the will to profit by it. It is a source of eminence, material, moral, and spiritual for all the nations of the world, yet not unless people follow its directions; hence it adds the words, "For him among you who pleases to go straight." But that will to go straight must be exercised in conformity with God's Will and such conformity is expressed by the word "Islam."

Not only was this perfect message of God delivered to mankind but its protection for all time to come was also guaranteed.

99. "Surely it is bounteous Quran in a book that is protected." (56 : 77-78)

100. "Nay : it is a Glorious Quran in a guarded tablet." (85 : 21-22)

101. "Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and surely We are its Guardian." (15 : 9)

Thus the protection of the Quran was not left to human beings. On the one hand, the guidance was brought to perfection, and on the other, a promise was given for its protection and preservation and, therefore, as a natural consequence the door of yet another prophethood has also been closed. It is for this reason that the Quran declares :

102. "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the

prophets (*Khatam-un-Nabiyyeen*) and Allah is ever Knower of all things." (33 : 40)

Three things are explicitly mentioned in the above verse. Firstly, the Prophet is not the father of any male descendents; secondly, he is the Messenger of God and thirdly, he is the "Seal of the prophets." There is a close relation in all these points. The Messenger is not the father of anybody in the physical but only in a spiritual sense he is the father of all his followers. Not only this, he occupies a superior status than that of other prophets, because after the coming of another prophet the spiritual lineage of the previous prophet gets terminated and the new prophet takes the place of the old and becomes the focal point, the rallying force of his people. All blessings are now obtained through him. Lest the title of the Prophet as the Messenger of Allah might give the impression that the spiritual lineage re-established by him might be terminated in course of time by the advent of another prophet, the title "*Khatam-un-Nabiyyeen*" is used to show that no other prophet would appear after him and thus his spiritual lineage will continue for ever.

The word "*Khatam*" meaning *Seal* has a deeper significance and includes both aspects namely perfection of the prophethood combined with finality. Though the Prophet Muhammad was admittedly the last of the prophets and history also bears testimony that no prophet appeared after him in the world, yet the Holy Quran has adopted the word '*Khatam*' and not "*Khatim*" because the phrase "Seal of the prophets" bears a deeper significance than mere finality, and indicates perfection of prophethood as well.

5

The Call To Prophethood

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had lived for forty years with the Meccans as a companion gaining the approbation of his fellow-citizens for his honesty and truthfulness above all worldly temptations and with a hobby to do odd jobs for the helpless and the indigent. This brought him in contact with a senior lady, Khadijah by name, whom he married at the age of twenty five though she was fifteen years elder to him. Both husband and wife lived a calm and peaceful life. He was however, not happy at the sight of terrible degradation of the Arabians who lived polluted and violent lives. Illiterate and ignorant of the politics, history and religion of any people or country, his contemplative mind could neither discover a model nor an example to shape the destiny of his community, nor could he solve the mysteries and tribulations of life by independent thinking. He groped in the dark and was mentally agitated. He used to retire to a mountain cave called "Hira" in the neighbouring hills of Faran and give himself up for months to contemplation and fasting. While thus absorbed in deep communion with the great Unseen yet all-pervading Power, one night, in the still hours, in the depth of his solitude he heard some one calling "Read !" Muhammad heard a voice far mightier and clearer than he had heard before, surging like

the waves of the ocean asking him to read. Twice the voice called and twice did Muhammad say that he was untaught. "Read"! called out the voice a third time and Muhammad then realised that he could no more evade. "What shall I read," he enquired. The answer came :

> 103. "Read in the name of thy Lord who hath created, who made man from a clot of blood. Read ! for thy Lord is Most Generous, Who teacheth man by means of the pen, teacheth man what he knows not."
> (95 : 1-5)

Muhammad repeated what he was told. He felt as if the words that were spoken had been written in the heart. It was not a dream, neither a vision. He was quite wide awake. But who was the medium that had taught him those wonderful words and who was he ? That was not explained to him. It was the highest reward, the culminating result of his spiritual evolution and elevation, a direct answer to his search for Reality. This first revelation was the beginning of his book of learning. The Reality, he was told, was his Lord (Arabic *Rabb*) Who is the Creator, Nourisher, Evolver, Ruler and Master of the universe, Who fostered a thing in such a manner so as to make it pass through one condition after another until it reached its goal of perfection - this being the significance of the word *Al-Rabb*. The first lesson of Muhammad's spiritual reader (The Quran) began with His name *Al-Rabb* revealing to him the wonderful mercy of God which manifests itself in the law of Evolution which is at work in the universe. The message was not an abstract proposition of philosophy but the direct concrete message of a personal God to the creature whom he loved and cherished. The word "thy" addressed to the Prophet is there because the Divine Messenger and He Who sent the message, were in direct contact.

The principal subject of the divine message is the man himself. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is taught that God's object in making man from a clot of blood is that he should have knowledge and become self-conscious as well as conscious of the universe surrounding him. The lowly origin of the animal in man is contrasted here with the high destiny offered to him in his

intellectual, moral and spiritual nature by his most generous Lord.

Acquired knowledge is the thing that distinguishes man from the rest of creation on this earth, and in obtaining knowledge the pen is the main instrument. Not until man began to hold the pen or chisel was there any progress in civilization of arts. The first attribute of God which man is reminded of is His generosity. Thus from the very first moment of the teaching of Islam, knowledge and generosity were made the basis of all spiritual progress. One of the chapters of the Quran named "Al-Rahman" begins with the words "Al-Rahman (the most Beneficent) has taught man the Quran (that is which is read). He has created man and taught him the art of self-expression."

Thus God Himself is man's teacher and the Quran is named a Reader or a book to be read. It is not a song but a book of knowledge. Again, Muhammad and through him every Muslim is commanded to pray : "My Lord ! Increase me in knowledge." (20 : 114)

This knowledge is of two kinds, of things that are and can be encompassed by man with his own efforts and experience, and things which are beyond his experience. God has undertaken to enlighten man in both kinds of knowledge. That is why the first revelation ends with the words "He teaches man what he does not know."

By no stretch of imagination and by no power of his pen can man know what is going to happen to him after death except with Divine information. The Quran is the book which gives him this information and directs him how to prepare for the life to come—the life that really matters and for which this our earthly existence is a beginning. It is in the next life that man is to become what he is intended for, but this life is all important because the next entirely depends on it. As is the seed so shall be the fruit. God's laws are unchangeable. God is generous and gives man full opportunity to get ready for His company in the life to come when he shall go from one stage of grace to another. But if he fails to fashion his life in harmony with the laws of life shown to him through

God's revelation, he shall have to undergo the agony of Hell until he is shorn of all the dross he so fool-hardily acquired inspite of God's guidance.

This book of God's knowledge is open to all mankind. It does not require man to feed God. He is above all feeding. It only requires man to be generous to one another and have faith in the one God and no other, for, there are no other gods. What is required of man is obedience to the laws of God, physical, moral, and spiritual. He who obeys God is led onwards towards his spiritual perfection and he who obeys his own rebellious self against God's commandments destroys his own destiny. This is the essence of Islam and Muhammad came to preach and teach this lesson.

What were the feelings of Muhammad on this glorious moment ? Not those of a man who wished to be a prophet and certainly not of an impostor (as the Christian critics would say). He had not as yet realised his mission. A severe conflict wrung his heart. Trembling with the words spoken to him engraved on his heart, he returned home hurriedly to his beloved wife, Khadijah, and cried "Cover me up, cover me up with a blanket." She covered him. He was in an ague as if he had fever. But his fear soon passed away and he cast an enquiring look at her as if he was in need of help. "O Khadijah ! What is the matter with me ? " And he related to her all that had happened. But she, who knew Muhammad as closely as nobody else could know, who knew his spiritual exercises, who had seen him in communion with God in the same cave where the call had at last come, with a true woman's intuition and being an angel of a wife, had no fear and no doubt. She returned his glances with a look of great reverence and said :

> "God is my protection O Abul Qasim. He will surely not let any grievous thing befall thee, for thou speakest the truth, keepest faith, and leadest a good life. Thou art kind to thy kinsmen, and friends, and dost not return evil for evil." (Bukhari 1 : 3, Muslim 11 : 88)

What a testimony of character and conduct and that from his own wife ! Voltaire had said that no man can be a hero to his valet. But the case is reverse here. The foremost to pro-

fess faith in the truth of the Prophet's mission was his wife Khadijah. Never for a moment did she entertain the slightist doubt in the truth of his claim to prophethood. In moments of depression she proved a never-failing source of solace to him. Fifteen years before when she did not stand to him in the relation of a wife, she had discovered in him noble qualities which had deeply impressed her. And this early impression had grown deeper and deeper the more she came to know of him through their greater intimacy as wife and husband. He was the most generous of all men, truthful, honest. and devoted to the service of the poor and the weak. He was bound to lead his people from barbarism to civilization. from ignorance into knowledge, from hatred into love, from darkness into light, from death into life. But who was that being that had appeared to Muhammad and taught him those wonderful words which she also could now recite.

She put herself in Muhammad's place and picture to herself the whole scene and the agitation of Muhammad, till she herself became agitated. To her the loss of Muhammad's little finger was a loss greater than her own life. She must do something to assuage and calm his mind if he again became agitated. His sleep, however, was a sleep of quiet happiness and she was happy too. But love is not without fears. What would happen to him if he told the Quraish what he had told her? What could she do? She pondered. She must consult someone who was wise and sympathetic. At last she thought of her old cousin Waraqa bin Naufal, who knew the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians.

Seeing Muhammad still sound asleep, she went to Waraqa and told him as briefly as she could all that had happened and her love for Muhammad and her hope for his future. Waraqa was moved and said : "Holy of Holies ! O Khadijah ! if thou hast told me the truth. the great *Rubul-Qudus*. the Great Spirit. has come unto him which came to Moses and Jesus and most surely he shall be the prophet of his people. Tell him to be steadfast."

Quickly she returned home and found her husband still asleep. She now looked at him with hope, happiness and

devotedness which her great soul possessed. Never had any man such a wife, never had any prophet such a companion. She looked on for sometime. Suddenly he became agitated, his breathing became heavy, perspiration flowed from his forehead; he got up and she heard him say :

104. "O thou enwrapped in thy mantle !
Wake up and warn, and thy Lord magnify.
And thy raiment purify and flee from pollution.
And accept not any increase in giving (for thyself)
And for the cause of thy Lord patiently persevere.
(74 : 1-7)

Khadijah came to him with increased affection and asked him to lie down and take rest. His answer was : "O Khadijah ! the time of sleep and rest is gone. Gabriel has told me to warn my people and to call them towards God and to His service. Whom shall I call and who will accept my call ?"

Khadijah consoled him and tried to calm him. Then she told him what Waraqa had said and filled with enthusiasm and emotion she declared her belief in one God and in Muhammad's prophethood. But she like Bilqees, the Queen of Sheba, had believed before this and her soul was above the worship and follies of her people. She was not the one inspired but she was his companion in inspiration.

Muhammad visited Waraqa and wanted his counsel. When he told him all that had happened, Waraqa said : By Him in whose hand is Waraqa's life ! God has chosen thee to be the prophet of thy people. The *Namus-i-Akbar*—the messenger from on high—has come to thee. Thy people will accuse thee of falsehood, persecute thee, expel thee, and fight thee. Ah ! That I could live till those days; I will fight for thee."

Then he approached Muhammad and kissed the crown of his head. Muhammad was convinced of the truth of what Waraqa had said and realised the gravity of his task. How was he to convert a people so engrossed in idol-worship that the Ka'ba, the house of God, built by Abraham for the worship of one God, enshrined hundreds of deities and their

priests exploited these deities for monitary gains. They believed neither in the life after death, nor in the Day of Judgement. As regards their morals, they had reached the lowest depths of degradation. Polygamy knew no bounds and woman was only a plaything to be enjoyed or discarded at the sweet will of the stronger sex. The heirs married all the widows of their dead fathers. They exulted in fornication and adultery, drunkenness and gambling. Promiscuous gatherings, singing and dancing were the order of the day and it made them lead a hectic and irrepressible life. Inter-tribal feuds and fights, looting and killing each other and boasting of their foul deeds in public meetings was a common practice of their elite. Such and still worse was the condition of Arab society which faced the Prophet. As yet he knew nothing of the troubles and trials of the prophets who had gone before him, but Waraqa's words were ringing in his ears : "They will belie thee, persecute thee, expel thee and fight thee."

Khadijah was there always comforting him. She was a woman brought up in a comparative luxury and ease. She was an angel in human form, but he wished the great angel, Gabriel, to enlighten him beyond the ken of a woman. But Gabriel delayed his coming. God has His own way and His own fixed time for everything. He let Muhammad wait and think out ways and means to carry out his mission. But Muhammad could hardly bear this suspense. Had God forsaken him? "God will never forsake thee," said Khadijah. "He will surely help thee." Muhammad's burden was the heaviest ever put on any man's shoulders. He would often turn to God and say : "God ! Enlighten me." And his prayers were accepted and Gabriel came with the heartening news :

> "By the forenoon and by the night when it spreads its darkness ! Thy Lord has not forsaken thee nor is He displeased with thee. And surely the future is better for thee than the past and surely in time thy Lord will bestow on thee (His Grace) so that thou shalt be satisfied. Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter and He found thee pathless, then He guided thee, and He found

thee in poor circumstances, then He made thee a man of means. Therefore treat not the orphan with harshness, nor repulse the petitioner (unheard) and rehearse and proclaim the bounty of thy Lord." (93 : I-11)

Muhammad was assured of himself. The Meccans may believe or deny him or do whatever they liked. His own future was assured. But the assurance carried heavy responsibilities. Muhammad was to bear up with all the troubles. The reminder as to his being an orphan and a poor man implies that there were other troubles ahead, but God would help him as He had done in the past.

The agitation of his mind was relieved and Khadijah was justified. The Prophet's face was enriched with smiles when he saw his endearing wife. From this moment he would rely on God entirely freed from all anxiety as to what men would do or say. Was he not an orphan when God found in Abdul Muttalib and Abu Talib good guardians for him ? Was he not poor when God inspired Khadijah and he became affluent ?

Seeking to discover the real motives of Muhammad in proclaiming himself as the Prophet of God, W. Irving in his "*Life of Muhammad*" puts the following questions which he himself answers thus :

"Was it riches ? His marriage with Khadijah had already made him wealthy and for years preceding "his pretended vision" he had manifested no desire to increase his store. Was it distinction ? He already stood high in his native place as a man of intelligence and probity. He was of the illustrious tribe of the Quraish and of the most honoured branch of that tribe. Was power ? The guardianship of the Ka'ba and with it the command of the sacred city, had been for generations in his immediate family and his situation and circumstances entitled him to look forward with confidence to that exalted trust. In attempting to subvert the faith in which he had been brought up, he struck at the root of all these advantages. On that faith were founded the fortunes and dignities of his family. To assail it must draw on himself the hostility of

his kindred, the indignation of his fellow-citizens, and the horror and odium of all his country men who were worshippers of the Ka'ba.

"Was there anything brilliant at the outset of his prophetic career to repay him for his sacrifices? On the contrary it was begun in doubt and secrecy. For years it was not attended by any material success. In proportion as he made known his doctrines and proclaimed his revelations they subjected him to ridicule, scorn, obloquy and lastly to an inveterate persecution, which ruined the fortunes of himself and his followers ; compelled some of his family and followers to take refuge in a foreign land ; obliged him to hide from sight in his native city, and finally drove him forth a fugitive, to seek an uncertain home elsewhere. Why should he persist for years in a course of imposture which was thus prostrating all his worldly fortunes at a time of life when it was too late to build up anew ?

"He was forty years of age before he first broached his doctrine. He suffered year after year to steal away before he promulgated them outside of his own family. When he fled from Mecca, thirteen years had elapsed from the announcement of his mission, and from being a wealthy merchant he had sunk to be a ruined fugitive. When he reached Madinah, he had no idea of the worldly power that awaited him ; his only thought was to build a humble mosque where he might preach and his only hope that he might be suffered to preach with impunity.

"His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done, had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearances as in the days of his adversity. So far from effecting regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room any unusual testimonial of respect were shown him. If he aimed at universal dominion, it was the deminion of faith ; as to the temporal rule which grew up in his hands, he used it without ostentation and he took no stop to perpetuate it in his family.

"The riches which poured in upon him from tribute and spoils of war were expended in promoting the victories of the faith and in relieving the poor among his votaries; in so much that his treasury was often drained of its last coin. Omar ibnul Harith declares that Mohamet at his death did not leave a golden dinar nor a silver dirham, a slave not a slave-girl nor anything but his grey mule Duldul, his arms, and the ground which he bestowed upon his wives, his children and the poor."

"It is this perfect abnegation of self, connected with this apparently heart-felt piety, running throughout the various phases of his fortune which perplex one in forming a just estimate of Mohamet's character."

6

The Prophet's Struggle At Mecca

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the foremost to profess faith in the truth of the Prophet's mission was his wife Khadijah. Then followed Abu Bakr, a notable Meccan who had close contacts with the Prophet. No sooner did Muhammad proclaim his prophethood than the former responded to the call. Ali, the son of Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, was also one of the earliest and the youngest believers. Zaid bin Harithah, a liberated slave of the Prophet, was also among the first converts. These people were most intimately connected with the Prophet and had a direct access to his private life.

All this happened within the close family or fraternal circle. But it was not the Divine Will that Muhammad (peace he upon him) should remain in seclusion. The revelation came :

105. "And warn they nearest relatives." (26 : 214)

106. Declare to them openly what thou art commanded and turn away from the pagans. Surely, we will suffice thee against the scoffers." (15 : 94-95)

On receiving this command the Prophet gave a feast to all his relatives at his house and called them all towards God in the following words of the Quran :

107. "You should serve none except Allah. Surely, I have been appointed by Him as a warner and a giver of good news. Ask forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him. He will provide you with a goodly provision for an appointed term and will bestow His grace on every one endowed with grace. And if you turn away, I fear for you the chastisement of a great day". (11 : 2-3)

Abu Lahab, one of his uncles, cut him short, and they all made a fun of him and left him. He again gathered all the elite of the Quraish at Safa, a hillock in the vicinity of the Ka'ba and addressed them thus : "Tell me if I inform you that a great army in the valley behind lies in wait to make a raid upon you, would you believe me?" "Aye", was the reply in one voice. "for, we have found nothing but truth emanating from the lips". "Then", said the Prophet. "Know that I am a warner to you of an approaching doom, if you persist in the worship of your idols and continue to indulge yourselves in evil practices."

"May you perish!" cried the ill-tempered Abu Lahab. "Was it for this that you called us together?" Muhammad was stung by the venom of Abu Lahab's cursed words, but God was not going to let him down. The revelation came in these predictive words :

108. "Perished the hands of Abu Lahab and he shall perish; His wealth and what he earns shall not avail him. He shall broil in a fire that flares, and his wife carrying faggots—on her neck a cord of palm-fibres". (111)

It is reported that Abu Lahab's wife who was foremost in spreading thorns in the pathway of Muhammad (peace be upon him) got herself strangled accidentally with a cord of palm-fibre which she was using to bind faggots, and her husband too, who according to one version, led the opposition died by falling in a ditch and breaking his hands."

The pagan Meccans did not suspect Muhammad as a clever schemer and it was but natural. They knew Muhammad's own grand-father who ruled over Mecca and when he died his uncle, Abu Talib took his place. The temporal and spiritual positions, he would have, ultimately filled himself if he had remained quiet. The Quraish only thought Muhammad to be a deluded

person, spoiling his own worldly prospects and interfering in the lives of his countrymen. They called him one possessed or suffering from hallucination or delusion, a magician, a soothsayer, a poet, a mad man. They did not accuse him of any immoral act or of any cheating or deception he might have committed during the forty years of his life he lived them, for, though utterly unscrupulous about inventing any malicious charge if they had so wished, they knew it would hold no water at all and they would only be discredited by their compatriots who knew him well. It was they who called him Al-Amin—the trustworthy. This is borne out clearly by the verse :

109. "Surely, they do not call thee a liar." (6 : 33)

They only persecuted him mentally and physically and the following verses from the Quran will give a picture of how he was treated by the Meccans.

110. "And they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves and the disbelievers say : this is enchanter, a charlatan." (38 : 4)

111. "And they say : "O you to whom the Reminder has come, thou art most surely insane." (15 : 6)

112. "Or do they say : There is madness in him". (23 : 70)

113. "Nay." Say they, "Medleys of dreams ; nay, he has forged it ; nay, he is a poet ; so let him bring to us a sign as the former prophets were sent with." (21 : 5)

The Quraish seemed to have been puzzled as to what they could liken the Quran to. They first called it "*Sihr*"—enchantment, because in spite of their opposition to it, it had an attraction to them. They called him a charlatan, a flaunter of sham learning and skill. Then they called the Quran medleys of dreams and then they called it an intentional forgery, and lastly, as if to devise one word combining all these, they called him a poet.

114. "Yet they turned their backs on him and said that he was one taught by others, a madman." (44 : 14)

115. "And the unjust say : You do not follow any but a man bewitched." (25 : 8)

These a legations are refuted in the following verses :

116. "Most surely it is the word of an honoured messenger. It is not the word of a poet, little is it that you believe; nor the word of a soothsayer ; little is it that you mind ; it is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. And if he had fabricated against Us any sayings in Our name, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand ; then We would certainly have cut off the artery of his heart and not one of you could have witheld Us from him." (69 : 40-47)

These verses show that one who fabricates Divine revelation does not prosper. In *Deuteronomy*, 18 : 20, it is said.

"But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die".

Jesus' words in Math, 7 : 19 "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." After comparing a false prophet with a corrupt tree that does not bring forth good fruit, point to a like effect,

117. "And your companion is not gone mad." (81 : 22)

118. "By the grace of thy Lord, thou art not mad and most surely thou shalt have a reward never to be cut off. (68 : 2-3)

Here is a prophecy that the Prophet will be successful in establishing a religion which shall never cease to exist, where as a mad man's actions do not bear any fruit even in his life-time.

119. "Continue to remind, for, by the grace of thy Lord thou art not a soothsayer or a madman. Or do they say : a poet. We wait for him for some calamity hatched by time." (52 : 29-31)

120. "And certainly We know they say : "Only a mortal teaches him;" the tongue of him whom they reproach is barbarous and this is clear Arabic tongue." (16:103)

Unable to meet the arguments of the Holy Quran the Quraish

had to adopt base and dishonest methods of reviling the Prophet to bring discredit to the Quran.

121. "And when thou mentionest thy Lord alone in the Quran they turn their backs in aversion." (17 : 46)

122. "And thou shalt certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before thee and those who are polytheists much abuse, and if thou art patient and be righteous, surely this is one of the affairs which should be determined upon." (3 : 185)

The fires of hatred, enmity, and barbarity burnt fiercely in the breasts of the chiefmen of the Quraish whose evil deeds sat heavily on their souls and whose bread and butter depended upon the worship of idols.

Abu Sufian, Abu Jahal, Abu Lahab, Walid bin Mughira, and many other leading men of the Quraish took upon themselves to oppose Muhammad tooth and nail and to let him have no rest. Hakam bin Hasham surnamed Abu Jahal threw the entrails of a camel on the head of the Prophet when he was adoring his Lord within the precincts of the Ka'ba. The revelation came :

123. "Hast thou considered him who forbids a servant when he prays...Surely, if he do not desist. We will drag him by the forelock, the lying sinful forelock, So let him call his counsel. We will call the guards of Hell. Nay, obey him not but adore and draw nigh." (96 : 9-19)

This was a prediction and Abu Jahal was killed in the battle of Badr afterwards, his head was cut off by a Muslim warrior who dragged it on the ground by the forelock.

Then came the condemnation of the ruling tribes of Mecca

124. "Woe to every slanderer, backbiter, who collects wealth and counts it. He thinks that his wealth can immortalise him. Not so ; he shall be hurled into *Al-Hutamah*, and what shall make thee understand what *Al-Hutamah* is ? The fire of Allah kindled which rises above the hearts. Verily it is (as if) an arch over them on long-drawn columns." (104)

The opposition grew in intensity. His own family, his own tribe the Quraish, who ruled Mecca, going against him, his two uncles stubbornly resisting and fiercely persecuting him, his other uncles mildly contemptuous. Their first line of attack consisted of abusive poems. A poet among the Arabs was a great personage. These masters of pen composed lampoons abusing Muhammad and declaring him to be a charlatan, an impostor. But these poems were barefaced lies and could have no effect. People knew Muhammad to be honest, truthful, just, kind, liberal and full of love for his countrymen. They failed entirely to make any impression either on the believers or the unbelievers. Failing in these attempts they demanded miracles only to wrangle with the Prophet and not be convinced.

"Well!" said God, "Here is the Quran, not yet fully revealed. You are proud of your power of eloquence and oratory. You say your poets are possessed of supernatural beings whom you call Jinn. Collect all your poets and all your supporters and ask them to produce a single sura like this Quran."

> 125. "Say : Surely if all men and Jinn combined to bring the like of the Quran, they would not be able to do so even if some of them were to back the others."
> (17 : 88)

And the Quraish had their mouths closed. They had demanded a miracle and it was there. They all knew that Muhammad was illiterate. Here was what he said was from God. If he were wrong, they could certainly compose something equal to or better than what he had produced. The Quran disarmed all critics and all rivals. Many an enemy of Muhammad and Islam came to him with evil intentions and after hearing him recite the Quran went back a believer.

The Holy Prophet continued to preach with an unswerving purpose and a small band of followers gathered round him. Amid frightful persecutions he held to the path of persuation, of reproof, and reform. The Quraish at last, realising to some extent the hopelessness of their task, held a council. They

deputed Utba bin Rabia to the Holy Prophet and addressed him thus :

"O son of my brother ! Thou art distinguished by the qualities and thy descent. Now thou hast sown divisions among our people and cast dissensions in our families. We have come to make a proposition to thee. If by this thou wishest to acquire riches, we will collect a fortune larger than is possessed by any of us; if thou desirest honour, and dignity, we shall make thee our chief and shall not do a thing without thee. If thou desirest dominion and power, we shall make thee king, and thou shalt rule over us; If thou desirest a woman, name her and we will bring her to thee, point to her and she shall be in thine arms."

(*Sirat*, Ibn Hisham, p. 92)

What a wonderful opportunity for a hypocrite or an impostor ! He could have been the overlord of Arabia and after establishing himself, he could have forced his views on them. But the Holy Prophet was neither a hypocrite nor an impostor. He stuck to the straight path and in reply he was commanded to say :

126. " Say : Whatever reward I ask of you, that is only for yourselves. My reward is but with Allah and He is a witness of all things." (34 : 47)

And he gave this admonition in the words of the Holy Quran :

127. " The Praised, the Glorious Lord ! This is a revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful; — a Book the verses thereof are distinctly explained, an Arabic Quran for a people who understand, a herald of good news and a warner, but most of them turn aside and so they hear not. And they say : our hearts are veiled from that to what thou callest us and there is a deafness in our ears and a veil hangs between us and thee. So act thou as thou shalt think best, we shall act according to our opinion. Say : Verily I am a man like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One God, there follow the right way to Him and ask pardon of Him for what is past. Woe to those who worship

many gods and to those who give not alms and believe not in the life to come. But as for those who believe and do good deeds they shall receive an everlasting reward." (41 : 1-8)

When the Holy Prophet finished this recitation he said to Utba : " Thou has heard. Now take the course which seemest best to thee."

The Quraish expelled the Holy Prophet from the Ka'ba and went in a body to his uncle Abu Talib and addressed him thus :

" We respect thine age and thy rank but our respect for thee has bounds. Verily we can have no further patience with thy nephew's preachings. Therefore do thou either prevent him from so doing, or thyself take part with him so that we may settle the matter by fight until one of the two parties is exterminated."
(Ibn Hisham, p. 96)

Abu Talib sent for the Prophet and appealed to him to renounce the task he had undertaken. Imagine the feelings of Muhammad. On the one hand were the Meccans, his most cruel persecutors ever ready to kill him if they could. There is his uncle, old and weary, unable to protect him any longer, appealing to him to give up his work, and there is the Almighty God commanding him to preach His word fearlessly. A very hard moment of trial indeed ! Finally the Prophet replied :

" O my uncle ! If they place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left to force me to renounce my mission, verily I will not desist an iota therefrom till Allah make manifest His cause or I perish in the attempt."
(Ibn Hisham p. 96)

These temptations and threatenings are alluded to in this verse.

128. "Surely, they strove hard to beguile thee away from that which We have revealed to thee that thou shouldst forge against Us other than that, and then they would

> certainly have taken thee for a friend. And had it not been that We had already established thee, thou wouldst certainly have been near to incline to them a little." (17 : 73-74)

The Prophet's missionary zeal brought about the conversion of some eminent persons like Osman, Zubair, Abdur Rahman, Sa'ad, and Taiha, who subsequently figured prominently in the history of Islam. Within the first five years so many as forty persons including many slaves accepted the faith. Hamza and Umar, two more prominent persons from among the Quraish added to the strength of this small brotherhood. The conversion of Umar is a remarkable instance of the appeal and attraction the Quran made to the Arab mind.

It is stated by Ibn Hisham, the earliest biographer of the Prophet's life, that Umar, a man of fiery temper who was bitter in opposition to Islam before his conversion, one day, made up his mind to put an end to the whole trouble once and for all. Girding his sword round his neck he shot forth to Muhammad's abode, when on the way he met Nuaym, who, in a state of alarm enquired of Umar what he was upto. "To put an end to Muhammad," was the curt reply. "You would better set your own house in order before taking such a step. Your own sister and brother-in-law have accepted Islam," rejoined Nuaym. Umar turned back at once, and went straight to his sister's abode. She was reciting portions of the Quran. Noticing his approach, she at once concealed the Quranic text. Umar had already overheard her and asked her what it was. "Nothing," answered the overawed sister. "No" said Umar, "I have heard that both of you have turned apostate." Saying this, he fell upon his brother-in-law. When his sister came to defend her husband, he beat her also, so much so that her body was bruised and she was bleeding. In the same state of agony she boldly and emphatically addressed him thus: "Do whatever you like, Umar, but nothing can tear out Islam from our hearts." Look at the invincible courage of the revered lady who was seriously injured and her body streaming with blood. She cared not for her life and

openly defied the great man of the day. She would sooner die than disavow Islam. It was that perfect and unalloyed faith in God and the mission of the Prophet that could not be shaken under any circumstances whatsoever.

Umar was deeply moved with this remark. He looked at his sister with compassionate affection. She was bleeding. He was smitten with grief at his conduct. His eyes were brimming with tears. "Yes, read out to me what you had been reciting," requested Umar. Fatima brought the leaves of the Quran and placed them before him. This was what he beheld.

129. "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorify Allah with silent eloquence and He is exalted, and most wise. To Him belong the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, for He has power over all things. He is the First, the Last, the Apparent, the Hidden, and He knows all things. He is who made the heavens and the earth into six periods and yet remained firm on His throne. He knows what sinks into the earth and what comes out there from and what falls from above and what rises thereto. He is with you wherever you be, for Allah sees what you do. To Him belongs the kingdom of the earth and the heavens and to Allah is the return of all affairs. He causes the night to merge into the day and the day into the night and He knows what is hidden in your breasts. Believe in Allah and His Apostle." (57 : 107)

Umar's strength gave way with every word of each verse. When he completed the recitation with the words "Believe in Allah and His Apostle," he exclaimed quite somewhat suddenly, "I believe. I believe, surely there is no God but One and Muhammad is surely His Apostle."

When this incident took place, the Prophet had taken asylum in the house of Arqam, situated at the foot of Safa. The companions of the Prophet were a little anxious to see the visitor armed with a sword, for they had no knowledge of the great event of Umar's change of mind.

"What brings thee here O Umar ?" asked the Holy Prophet, stepping forward to him as soon as he entered. The domineering resonance of Prophethood sent a thrill into Umar's veins and he began to quiver like a reed. Just think ! A man, heated with ungovernable rage and spirit, goes out with a drawn sword to kill Muhammad, and instead of perpetrating the foul outrage, be trembles in his presence and most devoutly supplicates him to take him in his fold and to illumine his heart with the light of faith. In all humility he makes declaration of faith, to the great joy of the brotherhood, who burst out in spontaneous shouts of "*Allahu-Akbar*" (God is Great) till the surrounding hills resounded with their glorification. Impenetrable are the mysteries attaching to the wonderful acts of the Omnipotent ! Instead of a bolt from the blue, the compassion of God was stirred up, and it accorded its warmest reception to the hot-blooded Umar, destined to experience a novel event of colossal importance which turned the tide of his life, and made him one of the most powerful and distinguished friends of his intended victim—an event which caused him to do the best of life's immortal tasks and, eventually, accomplish those grand destinies which history shall be always proud to narrate in glowing terms, and the importance of which the ravages of time will never be able to fade. He that came to destroy the house, became the builder of an imposing adifice.

Umar's conversion to Islam added fuel to the fire of the hatred and enmity of the Quraish. Their persecution and cruelties were redoubled, till life became an unbearable burden to the Muslims. In the fifth year of his mission a number of Muslims had to migrate to Abyssinia, a detail report of which is given in the pages that follow. In the seventh year, Muhammad and all his clan were ex-communicated and their food supply was cut off. When their children cried for want of food, the enemy Quraish laughed at their distress. A reference of this is given in the Holy Quran in these words :

130. "Surely, they who were guilty used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they

winked at one another. And when they returned to their own followers they returned exulting."

(83 : 29-31)

To add to Muhammad's difficulties, his devoted wife Khadijah and his beloved uncle Abu Talib passed away. Getting fed up with persecutions of the Meccans, he proceeded to Ta-if, a town over seventy miles to south-east of Mecca. Accompanied by his freedman Zaid, he invited the people of that city to follow him and give up idol-worship. They hooted him through the streets and pelted him with stones and at last compelled him to leave the city pursued by a relentless rabble. Blood flowed from both his feet and Zaid endeavouring to shield him was wounded in the head. The mob did not desist until they had chased him for some miles. Wounded and bleeding, footsore and weary he betook himself to prayer. Raising his hands towards heavens and with tears streaming from his eyes, he uttered the following touching supplication :

"O Lord ! Guide my people to the right path. They do not know me. Make them understand and do not forsake them. Perchance some of them will see the light and pay heed to Thy word...O Thou Merciful God. I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance by which all darkness is dispersed and peace cometh here and hereafter. Solve my difficulties as it pleases Thee, for, there is no power, no help but in Thee." (Ibn Hisham, p. 147)

A solitary man left to himself without friends, without helpers, suppressed at home, and cruelly treated abroad, receives this revelation in response to his prayers :

131. "And when the servant of Allah (Muhammad) stood up calling upon Him, they well-nigh crowded him to death. Say : I call upon my Lord and ascribe no partner to Him. Say, I control no hurt and no benefit for you. Say, none can protect me from Allah, nor can I find any refuge besides Him. Mine is but the conveyance of the Truth from Allah and the message. And who so disobeyeth Allah and rejects His message, verily his is fire of Hell wherein

> such dwell forever till the day they shall behold that which they are promised. They may doubt but they may know for certain who is weaker in allies and less in multitude." (72 : 19-24)

The message must be delivered, and the disbelievers shall be punished and their number shall be reduced, for God encompasses all.

Dealing with this incident of Ta-if, William Muir (P. 53) observes :

> "There is something lofty and heroic in this journey of Muhammad to Al-Taif, a solitary man, despised and rejected by his own people, going boldly forth in the name of God, and summoning an idolatrous city to repent and support his misson. It sheds a strong light on the intensity of his belief in the Divine origin of his calling."

7

The Migration

1. The First Migration

The Holy Prophet returned to Mecca, but as time rolled on life there became impossible for him and his followers. It is but natural that when man's patience to bear agony of mind and body reaches the limit, he should, for the sake of deliverance seek shelter in some foreign land where one's enemies cannot be expected to follow or be in a position to inflict further injury. Accordingly, the Prophet advised his companions to go to Abyssinia and they did. A reference of this migration is contained in the following verse :

> 132. "And remember when you were few, deemed weak in the land, fearing lest people might carry you away by force, then He sheltered you and strengthened you with His aid and gave you of the good things that you may give thanks." (8 : 26)

A small band of eighty three Muslims in two batches sought refuge with Negus (Najjashi), the Christian of Abyssinia, who extended his hospitality to them. But even in that distant land the Quraish were determined to harass the poor refugees. They sent emissaries to Negus with a pretence that the Meccans whom he had provided shelter in his dominions

were absconding 'criminals' and requested him to hand them over to them.

Negus summoned the refugees. When this small company of weary and sorely stricken followers of Islam appeared before him, he asked their leader what crime they had committed. "None that we are aware of," came the sharp reply. Then Negus enquired about their religion to which they adhered. Ja'far bin Abi Talib replied :

> "O king ! We were plunged in the depth of ignorance and barbarism ; we adored idols ; we lived in unchastity ; we ate dead bodies, and we spoke abomination ; we disregarded every feeling of humanity, and the duties of hospitality and neighbourhood ; we knew no law but that of the strong, when God raised among us a man, of whose birth truthfulness, honesty, and purity we were aware, and he called us to the unity of God, and taught us not to associate anything with Him ; he forbade us the worship of idols, and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts ; he forbade us to speak ill of women, or to eat the substance of orphans ; he ordered us to fly from vices and to abstain from evil, to offer prayers, to render alms, to observe the fast. We have believed in him, we have accepted his teachings and his injunctions to worship God and not to associate anything with Him. For this reason our people have risen against us, have persecuted us, in order to make us forego the worship of God and to return to the worship of idols of wood and stone and other abominations. They have tortured us until finding no safety among them, we have come to thy country and hope thou wilt protect us from their oppression."

When Negus heard this he was satisfied. To enhance the awakened sympathy, ripe with the spirit of Muslim love for all prophets, Ja'far recited the Sura of Cave in a most melodious voice which acted like a charm on the soft heart of Negus He turned to the Quraishite envoys and politely expressed his regrets to deliver over his guests.

Attended by failure, inflamed by impulsive revenge, and a

desire to retaliate, 'Amr bin al-'Aas, the chief envoy, advanced his most formidable tactic to make a decisive move in the accomplishment of his task. This time 'Aas took a steady aim to hit the bull's-eye. With a flowing anger in his eyes and clenched fists he declared in a defiant tone:

"O Mighty Ruler! Do you know what these miscreants say of your Lord Jesus?"

Ja'far realised that his position was no better than of a man standing on the deck of a burning ship in a stormy sea. Either he should submit to the advancing fumes or satisfy Nemisis by throwing himself and his party up to the wrath of the waves. Should he say the truth taught to him by the Prophet that Jesus was not the Son of God and face the music of Negus's probable aversion, or suppress it to serve the time? To Ja'far the fear of a kingly power was no excuse to tell the untruth. He, like every sincere and God-fearing Muslim, preferred death to bringing a slur on the teachings of his Preceptor and Prophet.

He rose from his seat. In a balanced posture and stated:

"The worthy host has asked me a question, a question which should be replied to as a duty. We are Muslims, and speaking plain truth is our ideal. The firmest pillar of Islam is the submission in the path of Truth, and I shall be untrue to my parents, my Prophet, and above all to my Creator Allah, if I desist in what I have to say. The fear of death or torture does not deter me from pronouncing what God through His Prophet taught us."

Then he began to recite the following verses of the Quran:

133. "And mention Mary in the Book, when she drew aside from her family to an eastern place and took a veil to screen herself from them; then We sent to her Our Spirit who appeared to her a well-made man. She said: Surely I fly for refuge from thee to the Beneficent God, if thou art one guarding against evil. He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord to announce to thee of a pure boy She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me

nor have I been unchaste. He said : Even so ; thy Lord says, it is easy to Me and that We may make him a sign to man and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.

So, she conceived him, then withdrew herself with him to a remote place and throes of child-birth compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree. She said : O would that I had died before this and had been a thing quite forgotten. Then a voice called out to her : Grieve not, surely thy Lord has made a stream to flow beneath thee. And shake towards thee the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on thee fresh ripe dates. So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if thou seest any mortal, say : Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today.

And she came to her people with him, carrying him with her. They said : O Mary thou hast done a strange thing. O sister of Harun ! Thy father was not a bad man nor was thy mother an unchaste woman. But she pointed to him. They said : How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle.

He said : Surely I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet, and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live and so be dutiful to my mother and He has not made me insolent and rebellious. And peace on me on the day I was born and on the day I die and on the day I am raised to life.

Such is Jesus, son of Mary : this is the truth about which they dispute. It beseems not Allah that He should take to Himself a son. Glory be to him. When He decrees a thing. He only says : Be, and it is. And surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord,

therefore serve Him ; this is the right path."
(19 : 16-36)

The audience saw a sudden flash of light on the face of Negus. In a state of seeming inspiration he exclaimed in a firm accent with a pronounced emphasis in every word he uttered according to one account picking up a straw :

"By God, Jesus, son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this straw."

The words came like a bomb-shell to the ears of the Quraish and the weird-looking representatives of the stern priesthood. The bubble of hope burst. The orthodox priests in their flowing robes began to stir life in the ornamented seats they occupied. An insult and a 'slander' to Christianity in a Christian court with a crushing conclusion by their own king and head of the realm was an uncommon spectacle. Negus was firm and resolute. His benevolent nature could not tolerate to see the spirit of rightous democracy and universal fraternity so beautifully summed up in a nut-shell suffer in his presence. Ja'far justified his title of a pioneer in Islam. His quality of the destructibility of the seed, planted a fresh and fruitful tree. The intended blow at the very root and foundation of Islam fell flat on the ground. The court rose, after a declaration by Negus of his refusal to surrender the little party. Later, he himself embraced Islam.

2. The First Pledge of Aqaba.

In the eleventh year of the Prophet's mission, on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage, six men of Yathrib (Madinah) came to Mecca to participate in the Hajj. As Yathrib contained a considerable Jewish element in its population, they had already heard from their neighbours that the time of the appearance of the promised prophet of their scriptures was at hand. They found Muhammad preaching the word of God to the tribes who had assembled in the valley of Mina and were so overwhelmed by his matchless eloquence that they exclaimed :

"Surely this is the Prophet with whom the Jews are ever

threatening us. Verily, it behoves us to make no delay but to be the first to follow him."

On their return to Yathrib, these people spread the news of Muhammad's mission and next year a bigger party of twelve came to Mecca to acknowledge him as the Prophet of God and enter the sacred fold of Islam. The following is the oath of fealty which they then took.

"We will not worship any but the One God ; we will not steal, neither will we commit adultery, nor kill our children : we will not slander in any way nor will we disobey the Prophet in anything that is right."

When the twelve had taken this solemn oath the Prophet raised his hands and blessed them saying :

"If ye faithfully fulfil the pledge you have just taken, then Paradise shall be your reward. He that shall fail in any part thereof, to Allah appertaineth His concern either to punish or to forgive."

This pledge is known as the first pledge of Aqaba, a place between mount Hira and Mina. A mosque now marks this historic spot.

3. The Second Pledge of Aqaba.

The twelve new Muslims returned to Yathrib as the zealous missionaries of Islam. Their fervour and their industry in propagating the faith was so great that the truth from Allah rapidly spread from house to house and from tribe to tribe. The idols of their ancestors were flung down and by tens and by scores the people accepted the invitation of Allah to enter into the habitation of peace.

So successful was the movement in Yathrib that the leaders thereof were unable to keep pace with the same. So they wrote to the Prophet to send them a teacher, capable of reciting the Quran and teaching Islamic religion. A zealous and young intelligent companion named Mus'ab bin Umayr, who had lately returned from exile in Abyssinia, was deputed for that

purpose in the course of time others were despatched to assist in his work.

In the next Hajj season seventy three ardent followers including the twelve original converts, assembled on the same spot hallowed by the pledge taken there twelve months previously. The Prophet accompanied by his uncle, Abbas (as yet as unbeliever but sufficiently trustworthy to be permitted to be present) arrived at the trysting place an hour or two before midnight to meet these men. Then Abbas addressed the assembly thus :

> "O men of Yathrib! You are well aware of the exalted rank that this my nephew Muhammad holdeth among my kinsmen. Though opposed to his new faith, we have supported him, because he is of our blood and will continue to support him ; but he hath found favour in the eyes of your people and is prepared to become one of you. I charge you, however to consider well the matter. If ye are strong enough to defend him against all who may rise up to harm him, if you be stout and valiant men, and are willing to sacrifice if need be, your lives and your goods to his cause, it is well ; but if such be not the case, then I charge you to abandon him now, and you will not be tempted to your eternal shame, to betray him later. O men of Yathrib, What do thou say?"

Then spoke Bari, an aged Yathribite chief and replied :

> "We have listened to these words. We are all men of one mind. Our resolution is unshaken. We will be faithful to our promises and to Muhammad, even though it costs us our lives. We have resolved firmly. It is now for thee O Prophet of Allah to speak and to give thy decision."

The Prophet replied first by reciting some verses from the Holy Quran, then dwelling on the blessings of Islam and finally concluding by stating that he would be content if all those present pledged themselves to defend him as they would protect and defend their wives and children.

Then the chiefmen of the tribes stood forth, and Bari, as their spokesman said : "Stretch out thy hand O Muhammad, thou Prophet of Allah." He stretched it forth and Bari struck his hand thereon and all the rest of the company came forward

and did the same. Then the Prophet named twelve of the chiefmen as *naqeebs* or leaders and the assembly was dispersed. So ended the memorable night on which was given the second pledge of Aqaba.

4. Conspiracy of the Quraish

As the days passed and the Quraish learnt more and more about the pledge of Aqaba, they grew more and more violent so much so that the unbelievers and the Muslims could not live together. The Prophet ordered his followers to migrate to Yathrib. Singly and in parties of twos and threes the Muslims left Mecca for Yathrib where they were most welcome, till excepting Muhammad, Ali, Abu Bakr, some women, old men and children were left at Mecca. The Quraish grew more and more impatient. The fire of hatred and enmity which was in their hearts was consuming them. They called a council and planned to surround the house of the Prophet by night and to kill him when he came out in the morning. This plan of theirs is referred to in the following verse :

134. "And remember, when the disbelievers began to make their plans with regard to thee to put thee in confinement or to kill thee, or to turn thee out ; they made their plans and Allah made his and Allah is the best of planners." (8 : 30)

5. The Prophet Migrates

But the Prophet got away un-noticed in the night, leaving his cousin Ali to occupy his bed, and with Abu Bakr, his bosom friend accompanying him, took refuge in a cave, while his enemies left no stone unturned to search him out. When the Meccan trackers reached the cave, Abu Bakr grieved within himself not on his own account but for one whose life was dearer to him than his own. It was indeed a critical moment. The sword of the blood-thirsty enemy was almost at their throats. A glance into the cave and the inmates would be cut to pieces. In such a situation the bravest heart might sink, the calmest mind might be dismayed. Death was staring them in the face and there was no way of escape nor any earthly pro-

tection. Yet even in this extreme hour of uttermost helplessness, the Prophet's heart was at perfect peace and knew no fear. With supreme and matchless faith in the protecting arm of God he quieted the anxiety and fear of his friend with the words "Be not grieved, for surely Allah is with us."

These memorable words of the Prophet uttered in such trying circumstances have been permanently recorded for the believers to take heart in their hour of trial.

135. "Surely, Allah helped him when those who chose disbelief turned him out, he being the second of the two, when they were in the cave, and when he said to his companion : Grieve not, surely Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down his calm upon him." (9 : 40)

Thus, the greatest event of history, the *Hijrah* of the Prophet took place, a fugitive flying for his very life from the beloved city of his birth after thirteen years of bitter persecution. But the revelation that came to him even long before his flight gave him the assurance that he would ultimately came back as a conqueror and be made the ruler in the land after the power of the Meccans was crushed.

136. "And those who disbelieved said : to the apostle : We will most certainly drive you forth from the land or else you shall come back into our religion. So, their Lord revealed to them : *Most* certainly We will destroy the unjust and most certainly We will settle you in the land after them." (14 : 13-14)

137. "Verily, He that has enjoined the Quran upon thee shall bring thee back to the destination (Mecca) (28 : 85)

138. "Surely, they decided to scare thee off the land that they might expel thee from it and in that case they will not tarry behind thee except for a little while." (17 : 76)

8

The Prophet's Struggle at Madinah

The emigrants (*Muhajirin*) numbering about 150 had no means of their own in their new habitations. The two tribes of the *Ansar* (Helpers) who gave shelter to the emigrants were already exhausted by their civil strife. The Jews who had their settlements within and around Madinah were expecting Muhammad to accept their faith and help them against the idolaters and the Christians. The Quraish at Mecca were certainly not going to sit idle and let Muhammad and his followers prosper at Madinah. Muhammad had no means of his own, no money, army or armour, no lands or houses, no horses or camels to ride on. But he had his God-given courage and the work he did at Madinah is without a parallel in the annals of human history.

Circumstances had burdened him with a task that had not been put on the shoulders of Noah or Abraham, Moses or Jesus. He had to evolve order out of chaos, strength out of weakness, unity out of dissension, and life out of inertia. This great burden which almost broke his back is referred to in these verses :

139. "Have We not expanded for thee thy breast and taken off from thee thy burden which pressed heavily upon

thy back and raised high the esteem thou art held."
(94 : 1-4)

The nobility of his character and the golden rules of his life are laid down in the following verses and they are the main-springs of his success.

140. "Surely, there has come to you a messenger from amongst you ; it is hard on him that you should be in trouble. He is most solicitous for your welfare, and loving, merciful towards the faithful." (9 : 128)

141. "Then it is due to mercy from Allah that thou art gentle towards them ; and hadst thou been rough-spoken, hard-hearted, they would certainly have scattered away from thy circle. Then overlook their faults and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the command, but when thou hast determined upon anything, then rely upon Allah. Surely, Allah loves those who rely upon Him." (3 : 158)

These verses are the keys to the explanation of all his sayings and doings. Let us put down what is stated in the above verses :

1. It is hard on him that anyone among his people should be in trouble.
2. He is most solicitous for their welfare.
3. He is loving. merciful, gentle in speech, and kind-hearted.
4. He always consults Muslims in affairs in which he has to give commands.
5. He then determines what to do and carries it out relying on God.

His struggle at Madinah is nothing but an implementation of these principles from which he never diverged, and temporary set-backs aparts, he always succeeded in his plans.

a) The Islamic Brotherhood

Islam is a comprehensive religion of human brotherhood and Muhammad laid its foundations between the Meccan refugees and the Madinite helpers by pairing them into brothers-in-Islam on the principle laid down in this verse :

142. "The believers are nothing but a brotherhood ; therefore make peace between your brethren and revere Allah that you may be shown mercy." (49 : 10)

143. "Surely, they who believed and left their homes and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and with their lives and those who gave shelter and helped these are guardians of each other." (8 : 72)

This bond of brotherhood had become so strong that when on the expulsion of Banu Nadhir, for their treachery, from Madinah, their property was distributed among the poor *Muhajirin*, the *Ansar* readily gave up their share in favour of their brothers-in-faith from Mecca. This is alluded to in the following verse showing how they preferred to help them against their own needs :

144. "And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who had fled to them and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given and prefer them before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of their soul, these are the people who are successful." (69 : 9)

b) Treaties for the Security of Madinah

The Prophet's next move was to make treaties with all the sections of the inhabitants of the city of Madinah and its suburbs including the Jewish tribes and Madinah was assured of peace and prosperity as long as the parties of the treaty remained faithful to its terms.

This precaution was essential, for, Muhammad knew very well that the Quraish would not let him in peace even at Madinah. Did they not torture and imprison the Muslim emigrants, separated husband from wife and mothers from their childrens, confiscate the property of emigrants, plan the death of the Prophet and fix a price of 100 camels for his capture and threaten Abdullah bin Ubay an attack on Madinah if he failed to banish the Prophet and the Muslims? War had been declared already on the Muslims. The following verse refers to this fact in plain words :

145. "Permission to fight is given to those against whom war has been declared, because they have been wronged, and most surely Allah is capable of helping them: those who have been expelled from their homes without just cause, solely because they say : Our Lord is Allah." (22 : 39)

Muhammad was, therefore, bound to send out reconnoitering parties to keep an eye over the movements of the Meccans. A number of skirmishes took place and, finally, the Meccans, fully equipped to strike a decisive blow, came down upon Madinah, but before they reached a place called Al-Badr, Muhammad was ready to meet them there.

c) The Prophecy relating to Badr

Before we refer to what the Quran has told us about this battle, we shall examine the prophecy given in the Bible about this battle, so that the Jews and the Christians may witness this sight which perhaps may help them to understand the Prophet rightly, because of its fulfilment.

Isaiah, the prophet after speaking of a future scene in the land of Arabia goes on to say :

"The inhabitants of the land of Tema, brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow and from the grievousness of war. For, thus hath the Lord said unto me, within a year, according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar shall be diminished." (Isaiah 21:14-17)

Kedar was the son of Ismael (Gen 25 : 13) and this word is used freely in the Bible for the Arab tribes that sprang from him. (Ps 120 : 5, Song 1 : 5, Isaiah 42 : 11, 60 : 7) There is only one person in history whose flight has become a memorable fact as the Era of Flight (the Hijrah). It was Muhammad who attended only by one faithful companion fled from the drawn sword of the guard that surrounded his house and it was one year after his flight that the glory of Kedar departed in the battle of Badr which took place in the second year of the Hijrah.

The battle of Badr was also a sign to the Jews and the Christians, because it indicated that their fate would be the same as that of the idolaters of Mecca if they joined them, for, is it not said in Math : 21 : 44 that "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall ground him to powder."

The story of this battle as told in the Quran will be narrated presently. but before we do so let us see what prophecies have been recorded about this battle in the Meccan revelations of the Quran.

146. "And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the cloud, and the angels shall be sent down a sending, the kingdom on that day shall rightly belong to the Beneficent God, and a hard day shall it be for the unbelievers." (25 : 25-26)

147. "On the day We will seize them with the most violent seizing. Surely We will inflict retribution." (44 : 16)

148. "Soon shall the hosts be routed they shall turn their backs." (54 : 45)

149. "And they say : when will this threat come to pass if you are truthful? Say : May be there may come to you after I leave." (27 : 71-72)

150. "For them there is an appointed time from which they shall not find a refuge." (18 : 58)

d) The Battle of Badr

In the following verses the Quran has preserved only those incidents which hold out a lesson for the believers and a warning for the unbelievers.

151. "Indeed, there was sign for you in the two hosts which met together, in encounter, one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving whom they saw twice as many as themselves with the sight of the eye, and Allah strengthens with His aid whom He pleases. Most surely there is a lesson in this for those who have sight." (3 : 12)

152. "And Allah did certainly assist you at Badr when you were weak." (3 : 122)

153. "Even as thy Lord caused thee to go forth from thy house with the truth, though a party of the believers were surely averse. They disputed with thee about the truth after it had become clear, and they went forth as if they were driven to death while they saw it. And Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours and you wanted that the one not armed should be yours but Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, though the guilty disliked." (8 : 5-8)

The two parties referred to in the above verses were the unarmed caravan of the Quraish going to Mecca and the armed force of the Quraish that had started from Mecca to invade Madinah. Naturally, some of the Muslims desired that their encounter should take place with the unarmed Quraish caravan and not with the powerful army which was advancing on Madinah. But according to the prophecies already made during the Prophet's stay at Mecca, the time for their fulfilment had arrived and therefore it was necessary that the Muslims should meet the armed forces of the Quraish and so Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words and to cut off the root of the unbelievers. It was God's wish that the issue between Islam and disbelief be decided in the second year of the Hijrah and it was so.

154. "When you sought aid from your Lord, so. He answered you : I will assist you with a thousand angels with others in reserve and Allah only gave it as a good news so that your hearts might be at case thereby, for, victory is only from Allah, surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. He caused calm to fall on you as a security from Him and sent down upon you water from the cloud that He might thereby purify you and take away from you the filth of the devil and that He might fortify your hearts and steady your steps thereby." (8 : 9-11)

Before the rain fell the Muslim position was very weak. The enemy had the command of water and the Muslims were in a low sandy place. The enemy having taken possession of the drinking water, the Muslims feared being troubled by thirst which is called "the devil of the desert." The rain strengthened the position of the Muslims, for, they collected the rain-water in a dug-out. The sandy ground was loose on which they had to fight. The rain hardened it and enabled them to plant their feet firmly, and this timely assistance made them certain of the Divine help towards victory over the enemy.

155. "When your Lord revealed to the angels : I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror in the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every finger-tip of them. This is because they acted adversely towards Allah and His Apostle—then surely Allah is severe in requiting evil...so you did not slay them but it was Allah who slew them and thou did not cast but it was Allah who cast and that He might test the believers by a gracious trial by Himself, for Allah is Hearing, Knowing." (8 : 12-17)

When the battle began the Holy Prophet prayed and threw a handful of sand towards the enemy, symbolical of their rushing blindly to their fate. This had a great psychological effect. Every act in the battle is ascribed to God as it was in His cause and it was not undertaken except by His command.

Numerically the odds against the Muslims were three to one. Militarily, they were at a disadvantage while the enemy was fully armed and equipped. Three hundred or over, mostly raw young men, quite inexperienced in the art of war, equipped with neither horses nor proper arms, prevailed against a thousand of the most renowned warriors. In all these there was a test but the test was accompanied by gracious favours of countless value. Their commander was one in whom they had perfect faith and for whom they were ready to lay down their lives ; the rain refreshed them ; their spirit was unshaken as they were fighting in God's cause. Thus the trial or test became itself a blessing.

156. "O unbelievers! If you prayed for victory or judgement, the judgement then has indeed come to you and if you desist, it will be better for you, but if you return to fight again. We too shall and your forces shall avail you nothing even if they were multiplied. Verily Allah is with those who believe." (8 : 19)

It is related that when the Quraish left Mecca to invade Madinah, they prayed at Ka'ba to give victory to those who were rightly directed and they were confident that their superior numbers, equipped and experienced, would be decisive. They are told here that the decision has come and the victory but not in the sense they have hoped for.

157. "Remember the occasion when you were on the hither side of the valley and they (the Meccans) were encamped on the farther side and the caravan was on a lower ground (towards the sea-coast). Had there been a pre-conceived plan on your part to fight the enemy, you would have failed to carry it out at this (critical) juncture. But it happened as it did without the forethought of either of you that Allah might accomplish a thing already decreed (by Him) that whoever was to perish should perish with a clear understanding (on whose side was Allah) and whoever was to survive should survive with a similar understanding. Verily Allah Heareth and Knoweth (what each one felt).

The Muslims were on the side of Madinah and the main army of the Quraish was on the side of Mecca and farther from Madinah while the controversial Meccan caravan was in a lower place towards the sea-coast. If they had known their real weakness, the Muslims would have failed to keep the engagement but God had decided that the encounter should take place and the disbelievers vanquished in fulfilment of the many prophecies that were already made from the very commencement of the Prophet's career.

158. "Remember in thy dream Allah showed them to thee as few. If He had shown them to thee as many, you would surely have been discouraged and you would

surely have disputed in your decision, but Allah saved you, for He knoweth well the secrets of all hearts. And remember, when you met He showed them to you as few in your eyes and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes, that Allah may accomplish a matter already decided, for, to Allah are all affairs referred." (8 : 43-44)

The enemy were shown to the Prophet in a dream to be few and they were also shown to the Muslims to be few on the field of battle. The Quraish came exulting with the intention of destroying Madinah and they despised the contemptible little force opposed to them. Both these psychological aberrations subserved the main plan which was to bring the matter to a decisive issue whether the idolaters of Mecca were to continue their arrogant oppression or the religion of God was to be established in freedom and honour.

The winning of the battle of Badr, the first pitched battle of Islam was the most glorious event in its history. The Prophet urged them to fight and the faithful responded with one heart. They did not fight to live. They fought to die and win Paradise and they lived. Eleven out of the fourteen leaders who had conspired to kill Muhammad at Mecca were killed in this battle along with many others totalling 70 and 70 of them were taken prisoners who were ransomed later. The Muslim losses were 14 in all. This victory endowed the Muslims with a will to win, the value of which cannot be reckoned in terms of men and money. Just as the Prophet is an exemplar to all Muslims, so is Badr the ideal of Muslim battles. When Muslims fight, they must fight for the love of God only and to establish His Truth.

159. "Surely, Allah has purchased from the faithful their lives and their belongings in exchange for Paradise that is for them." (9 : 111)

The Jews and the disbelievers all over Arabia now became aware that a new power had arisen amongst them which was bound to win unless they succeeded in smothering it before it becomes invulnerable.

The result of the battle was in fact a Divine judgement against wrong, while right received Divine support and triumphed. The designs of the enemy were frustrated while the Muslims saw in the enemy's destruction the fulfilment of Divine promise held out to them all these thirteen years that truth will prevail. Throughout the prolonged period of trial and hardship they had received Divine consolation that all opposition would break down and Islam would emerge triumphant. What they had implicitly believed they now saw actually come to pass, naturally enough, the righteousness of the cause of Islam becoming manifest. This day is called in the Quran "*Yaumul Furqan*" the day of criterion or a decisive day.

> 160. ..."If you do believe in Allah and the revelation We sent down to Our servant on the day of Decision (criterion) the day of the meeting of the two forces, for, Allah hath power over all things." (8 : 41)

e) The Change of Qibla

Before we describe the other encounters which the Prophet had to face at Madinah, let us note one important event that took place about this time. It was the change of *Qibla*. Qibla is the direction towards which one turns his face when saying his prayers. When the Holy Prophet was at Mecca he used to pray with his face turned towards Jerusalem but when he came to Madinah where the Jewish element was strong and powerful, he was directed by Divine revelation to turn his face towards the *Ka'ba*. If Abraham's seed was to be blessed in Ismael's progeny, it was necessary that the Qibla should be the House purified by Abraham and Ismael. This change contained a clear prophecy that Mecca would be conquered by the Muslims, for, an idolatrous temple could not be the Qibla in a religion of pure monotheism.

The Holy Prophet longed that the *Ka'ba* should be his Qibla, for, at Madinah in turning his face to Jerusalam he had to turn his back to Mecca. But he did not take any step until he had received the Divine revelation. Here is one more instance for the adverse critics of the Prophet to ponder. If his revelation had been the outcome of his own desires, he would not

have waited for sixteen months for a relevation to change the Qibla.

161. "And We appointed the Qibla to which thou wast used to, to test those who followed the Apostle from those who would turn upon their heels. Indeed it was a momentous change except for those whom Allah hath guided aright and Allah would never make your faith fruitless, for, most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to all people.

Indeed We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to heavens. Now We shall surely turn thee to a Qibla that shall please thee. Turn then thy face towards the sacred mosque, and wherever you are (O Muslims) turn your faces towards it ; and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord and Allah is not unmindful of what they do." (2 : 143-144)

The faithful had no hesitation to accept the change, but those Jews who accepted the Prophet half-heartedly and were acting as hypocrites in the Muslim community were shown in their true colours. They ought to have realised that Abraham prayed for a Prophet from among the descendents of Ismael. The sacred House which Abraham had purified with his own hands in the place where he left Ismael should, therefore, be the centre of the exertions and of the future conquests of the Holy Prophet of Ismael's seed.

f) The Battle of Uhud

The Meccans were now determined to wipe out the disgrace sustained at Badr and to annihilate the Muslims at Madinah. To this end, they collected a large force and marched on Madinah. This time they were so confident of victory that their womenfolk came with them and showed the most shameful savagery after the battle. To meet the threatened danger Muhammad at first intended to stay within and defend the city but in consultation with his men who were enthusiastic to give an open battle to the enemy and win or die as martyrs, decided

to take the open field with 1000 men, all that could be collected against a force of 3000 warriors of the Quraish fully armed and intent upon taken vengeance upon the Muslims. One-third of the army under the leadership of Abdullah bin Ubay, the hypocrite leader, deserted the Prophet and returned to Madinah. But Muhammad with his usual foresight, courage and initiative, even with the little following of 700 at his command took his position at the foot of mount Uhud which flanked the city of Madinah some three miles to the north, and stationed about fifty archers to guard an opening in the rear and never to leave their post at any cost.

In the beginning the battle went well with the Muslims and the enemies were routed in spite of their superior numbers and equipment. The archers in order to join in pursuit of the retreating enemy left their position, unmindful of the strict orders of the Prophet. The enemy cavalry under Khalid wheeled round and took advantage of the gap left unguarded by the archers and attacked from the rear. This changed the situation and the retreating enemy turned back and fell upon the Muslims who were now in disorder and had lost their naturally fortified position. There was severe hand-to-hand fighting in which numbers told in favour of the enemy. Many of the companions fell defending the Prophet who had now become the target of the enemy and the Prophet himself received wounds in his head and face. Had it not been for his firmness, courage and coolness, all would have been lost. This is just a brief account of the battle. Now let us see what the Quran tells us about it.

162. "Remember that morning when thou didst leave thy house to post the faithful at their stations for the battle—and Allah Heareth and Knoweth all things—two of your parties meditated cowardice, but Allah was their protector and in Allah should the faithful put their trust." (3 : 121-122)

The two parties referred to here were Banu Salma and Banu Harith who entertained the idea of deserting the army of Abdullah bin Ubay's running away with his 300 followers, on account of which a great disparity was created between the two contending forces. But they soon set aside their misgivings

under the Prophet's inspiration which gave the assurance of victory with the help of the heavenly hosts.

163. "Remember thou saidst to the faithful : Is it not enough for you that your Lord should help you with 3000 angels sent down? Yea, if you remain firm and act aright, even if the enemy should come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord would help you with 5000 angels making a terrific onslaught. Allah did not make it but as good news for you and an assurance to your heart. Know that there is no help except from Allah, the Exalted, the Wise." (3 : 123-126)

Whatever happens, whether there is a miracle or not, all help proceeds from God. Man could not be so arrogant as to suppose that his own resources will change current of the world-plan. God helps those who show constancy, courage, and discipline and use all the human means at their disposal, not those who fold their hands and have no faith. God's help is determined on considerations exalted far above our petty human motives and by perfect wisdom, of which we can have only a faint glimpse.

164. "If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the other party. Such days of varying fortunes We give to men by turns that Allah may know those that He may take to Himself from your ranks martyrs (witnesses to truth) for, Allah loveth not those who do wrong." (3 : 140)

In these verses a reference to the reverses at Uhud is made and a consolation is also administered. Success or failure comes to all at varying times. We must not grumble as we do not see the whole of God's plan. Man's true mettle is known in adversity as gold is assayed in fire. Martyrdom is in itself an honour and a privilege. If there is any dross in us it will be purified by resistance and struggle.

165. "Many were the ways of life that have passed away. Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected truth. Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear

Allah. So, lose not heart nor fall into despair, for you shall gain mastery if you are true in faith." (3 : 137-139)

If there is defeat, we must not be dejected, lose heart or give up the struggle. God's truth will endure and will gain mastery in the end.

166. "His object also is to purge those that are true in faith and to deprive the unbelievers the blessings. Did you think that you would enter heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard and remained steadfast. You did indeed wished for death before you met it; so indeed you have seen it with your own eyes." (3 : 141-143)

The purge was in two senses. It cleared out the hypocrites from the ranks of the Muslim warriors. The testing strengthened the faith of the weak and wavering, for, suffering has its own mission in life. The Prophet's example — wounded but staunch and firm as ever — put new life in the Muslims.

167. "Muhammad is no more than an Apostle. Apostles before him have passed away. If he died or was slain, will you then turn back on your heels ? If any did turn back on his heels, he will not do the least harm to Allah. But Allah will (on the other hand) swiftly award those who serve him with gratitude. Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed. If any do desire a reward in this life. We shall give it to him and if any do desire a reward in the Hereafter We shall give it to him and swiftly shall We reward those that serve Us with gratitude. How many of the prophets fought in His way and with them fought large bands of godly men, but they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken in will, nor give in. God loves those who are firm and steadfast. All that they said was : Our Lord ! Forgive us our shortcomings and any thing that we might have done

that transgressed our duty, establish our feet firmly, and help us against the unbelievers. And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter. For, Allah loveth those who do good." (3 : 144-148)

The Holy Prophet received severe wounds in the battle, so much so that it was rumoured that he was killed. Even if the Prophet were killed, Islam was far superior to all other faiths and it cannot be that the Muslims go back to their former religion. Truth is truth though its advocate might be killed in a battle, but truth could not be forsaken, nor could falsehood and superstition be accepted though their advocates might prevail for a time.

168. "And certainly Allah fulfilled His promise to you when you were about to annihilate the enemy by His permission until you flinched and fell to disputing the order and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight of the booty which you covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then He diverted you from your foes in order to test you. But He forgave you. For, Allah is full of grace to those who believe.

Behold ! You ran off precipitately and not wait for any one, and the Apostle was calling you from your rear. There Allah gave you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for the booty that had escaped you and for the ill that had befallen you, for, Allah is well aware of all that you do." (3 : 152-153)

Uhud in the beginning was a victory for the Muslims. Many of the enemy were slain and they were retreating. When the enemy was apparently routed, the archers who were placed in a strategic position to safeguard the rear and the left flank of the Muslim army, abandoned their post lured by the love of booty and only the leader of the archers, Abdullah bin Jubair was left with a handful of the obedient. The enemy who was being pursued turned against the pursuers on seeing the strategic position of the archers vacant. No sooner did the Prophet

see Khalid, the leader of the enemy cavalry, advance and take up the position deserted by the archers than he perceived the critical nature of the danger to which the Muslim army got exposed. Finding them hard-pressed and in confusion he shouted at the top of his voice : "Rally to me. I am indeed the Messenger of Allah," As soon as the Prophet's voice reached their ears, they turned towards him. But this exposed the position of the Prophet to the enemy and he became the target of their attack. But the companions mustered strength around their beloved leader. By that time he already sustained wounds and had fallen to the ground. His devoted friends protected him making a human wall around his body. The enemy bore down upon this point in all force but the human wall of Muslim soldiers proved invulnerable. A gap created by the fall of one was instantly filled by another rushing in to take his place. Many precious lives were lost in this encounter and many were fatally wounded. Meanwhile, the main body of the Muslims again closed their ranks and once more gave the enemy a good fight. The Quraish exerted their utmost and made repeated attacks but they were repulsed every time. At last they thought it advisable to retreat, for God spread terror in their ranks and their leader Abu Sufian and his hosts retreated in hot haste towards Mecca.

169. "What ye suffered on that day the two armies met was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers and the hypocrites also."

(3 : 166)

The Holy Prophet is an exemplar to Muslims and it was necessary that he should leave an example how a Muslim general should behave when the day is going against him. The misfortune at Uhud was one of the greatest blessings in disguise. It was a beacon of hope and courage for succeeding generations of Muslims lest in times of distress and disappointment they should ever lose heart.

Before we close this episode let us study the philosophy of martyrdom which the Quran presents to us for our guidance in connection with Uhud.

170. "Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah and with regard to those left behind who have not joined them in their bliss, the martyrs glory in the fact that on them is no fear nor have they cause to grieve. They rejoice in the grace and bounty of Allah and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the faithful to be lost in the least." (3 : 169-171)

Those who lose their lives in the cause of truth are not to be considered as dead. They live in a far higher and deeper sense than in the life they have left. Through the gateway of death they enter the true real life as opposed to its shadow here. Our carnal life is sustained with carnal food and its joys and pleasures at their best are those which are projected on the screen of this material world. Their real life is sustained by the ineffable presence and nearness of God. The martyrs not only rejoice at the bliss they have themselves attained, the dear ones they have left behind are in their thoughts. It is part of their glory that they have saved their dear ones from fear, sorrow, humiliation and grief in this life even before they come to share the glories of the Hereafter. Their dear ones have no cause to grieve at the death of the martyrs rather they have every cause to rejoice.

g) The Battle of the Ditch or the Confederates.

The battle of Uhud had a very disquieting effect on the Arab tribes in general. They saw that the Meccan Quraish were bent upon crushing Islam. Otherwise they would not have taken the trouble and cost of so big an expedition as was organised for Uhud. The weakness shown by the Muslims at Uhud prompted the idolatrous Arabs to join forces with the Quraish in its complete overthrow. The Jewish communities of Madinah disregarding their treaty with the Muslims, joined the Quraish in conspiracies. The attitude of the hypocrites under the leadership of Ibn Ubay became more inimical. Consequently, the very next year a great confederacy was

formed. A large army of ten thousand was brought together in the fifth year of the Hijrah. Even the Jewish tribes within the walls of Madinah broke terms and supported the assailants. Humanly calculating there was little chance for the little band of Muslims to survive the onrush of these devastating hosts.

It was an hour of terrible consternation for the Muslims when the confederate hosts fell in full force upon Madinah. The very foundations of the city were shaken. The Quran depicts the anguish and perplexity of the moment in these words :

171. "When they came upon you from above you and from below you, the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats and you began to think diverse thoughts about Allah. There the believers were tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking." (33 : 10-11)

This condition was only natural when such a large army was advancing against a mere handful of men. The "divers thoughts" signify the fears of the weak-hearted hypocrites that Allah's promise would not prove true and that the enemy would certainly destroy them. The prophecies of the victory of the Muslims were not vague utterances but clear and emphatic assertions. There was an unmistakable promise of victory in these words :

172. "A mighty host of the allies shall be here put to flight." (38 : 11)

But the circumstances were decidedly against the fulfilment of that promise and hence the weak-hearted said that the promise of victory was given only to deceive them. Such were the misgivings of the hypocrites.

This promise was given long before and at a time when the Holy Prophet and his handful of followers were being severely persecuted at Mecca. When the combined forces attacked Madinah, the words of the prophecy were before the

eyes of every true Muslim. What was their reaction ? Let the Quran say it :

173. "And when the believers saw the confederates they said : This is what Allah and His Apostle promised us and Allah and His Apostle spoke the truth. It only increased them in their faith and submission."

(33 : '2)

When the first shock of the news was over, the faithful set to work. A trench five yards deep and five yards broad and covering the whole length of the open side of Madinah was dug within six days. The Prophet himself worked with his own hands in digging the trench along with his followers. The Muslims had hardly finished digging the trench when Abu Sufian approached Madinah. He was elated at meeting no resistance and now Madinah lay before him. He ordered a quick march on to Madinah with swords drawn and bows ready to shoot and drums beating, idols being praised, and women shouting with joy of victory and revenge which they thought was now certain. Muhammad (peace be upon him) let them come on.

Suddenly, the horses stopped and reared back, the camels would not go forward and the men gasped as they saw the big chasm before their eyes. They had seen nothing like it before. Here was a miracle of human ingenuity which baffled a host of ten thousand strong.

The Muslims had to guard the trench by day and night. Hungry and semi-starved, they held on to their posts like grim death. The seige continued for more than two weeks and the confederates could make no progress. If force could not overthrow Muhammad, let treachery be employed—so thought the Jewish part of the allies. There was still one Jewish tribe of Banu Quraiza left in alliance with Muhammad. If they opened their doors to the confederates Muhammad could be finished. The strategy proved successful, and the Quraiza agreed to turn traitors. The hypocrites who were with Muhammad found it a good excuse to leave him and go back to their homes. The Quran exposes them in these words.

174. "And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say : Allah and His messenger have promised us nothing but a deception, and a party of them said : O ye people of Yathrib ! There is no place to stand for you here, therefore go back, and a party of them began to ask permission of the Prophet to go, saying : Surely our houses are undefended. they only desired to run away as they were not undefended and if people had got entry into the city from its sides and come upon them and then asked them to wage war, they would have gone over to them and not hesitated therein but a little. And most surely they had already convenanted with Allah not to turn their backs, and Allah's convenant will surely be enquired into." (33 : 12-15)

It was really a miracle that Muhammad's followers could stand the strain. God alone was sustaining their faith in Him, and the miracle did take place, for, has not God foretold them that :

175. "If you remain firm and act aright, even if the enemy should come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will help you with five thousand angels making a terrific onslaught." (3 : 124)

On the twenty seventh day of the siege when the night came, it was a night of terror. The wind blew a hurricane and rain poured down as if it was going to be another deluge. Lightning blinded people's eyes and thunder which followed it put terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. Their tents were thrown down with the force of the wind and the animals scattered not knowing where to go or where to seek shelter. The cooking utensils were either broken or filled with sand. The enemies of Muhammad were terror-struck, confused and helpless against the fury of the elements. They fancied that the Muslims had crossed the trench and were going to fall on them.

The rain poured on and the hurricane gave no respite and the Arab hosts, with whatever they could manage to take with

them rode off till they were at a safe distance from Madinah. Muhammad's companions knew nothing of their departure till the morning. The nightmare of disbelief had vanished into thin air. The promise of God was fulfilled.

> 176. "O you who believe! Call to mind the favour of Allah when there came down upon you hosts. We sent against them a strong wind and hosts that you saw not and Allah sees what you do." (33 : 9)

(h) *The Truce of Hudaibiya.*

The battle of the confederates established the fact that Islam was supported by the Divine hand. The swords were drawn against the Muslims from all sides, first at Badr, then at Uhud and again at Madinah itself, each time with increased vigour, but instead of destroying Islam it helped as it were to spread it. The greater the attempt to crush it, the more it flourished. Day by day it went on thriving. The Divine hand was supporting it. There was a full in the war-spirit for the time being.

Muhammad saw in a vision that he was performing the pilgrimage at Mecca. He thought it was an order and hence started on his journey to Mecca with his followers numbering about fifteen hundred, and with the exception of swords no other weapons of war were taken, for, he never intended to engage himself into any conflict on the sacred journey within the sacred territory in the sacred months. It was a time when all hostilities were suspended to enable the pilgrims to visit the sacred shrine at Mecca in peace and security. But the Meccans, against all tradition, opposed him at Hudaibiya, a place in the vicinity of Mecca. He sent Osman to Mecca to negotiate with the Quraish to allow him to perform the pilgrimage as he had not come to fight with them. Osman was long in returning and it was rumoured that he was slain by the Quraish who were bent upon fighting. The Muslims were not sufficiently armed to fight and much smaller in number. It was a critical situation. The Prophet called upon his companions to pledge themselves afresh that they would fight to the very last man in the defence of their faith if the

Quraish compelled them to fight. The pledge was cheerfully taken under a tree and is called in history as Bai'at-i-Ridwan. It was an act of dauntless self-sacrifice in the cause of Truth and a red-letter event in the annals of Islam. This pledge is referred to in the Quran in these words :

177. "Surely, those who swear allegiance to thee do but swear allegiance to Allah ; the hand of Allah is above their hands. Therefore whoever breaks the faith, he breaks it only to the injury of his soul and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah. He will grant him a mighty reward." (48 : 10)

178. "Certainly, Allah was well-pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to thee under the tree and he knew what was in their heart. Therefore He sent down tranquillity on them and rewarded them with a near victory." (48 : 18)

The Muslim's resolve to defend their faith at all cost brought the Quraish to their senses...Their past experience made them realise what such a resolve meant. Unarmed though the Muslims were, and numerically weak besides, the Quraish foresaw that disaster was in store for them should battle be started. Thus chasened in spirits they deputed one Suhail bin Amr to start peace negotiations. A treaty was drawn up restoring a state of peace between the two parties for a period of ten years. The terms of the treaty appeared humiliating to the Muslims, specially the clause which stated that should a Meccan Muslim seek refuge at Madinah, he should be repatriated but should a Madinite desert the Muslims and go over to the Quraish, he shall not be delivered, and that they should not perform the Hajj that year.

In spite of the face that this provision was galling to the minds of the companions they obeyed Muhammad relying on his wisdom and foresight. The treaty of Hudaibiya shows how solicitous the Prophet was for peace.

Muhammad sacrificed the animals without performing the Hajj and returned to Madinah. On his way back the chapter of the Quran entitled *Al-Fatah*—"(Victory)" was revealed to

him. Muhammad was extremely happy, for, God told him distinctly in this chapter that the treaty of Hudaibiya was a victory for Islam, a number of future victories were promised and all that he did at Hudaibiya was confirmed. This brought a great relief to the Muslims. The chapter begins thus :

179. "Surely, We have given to thee a clear victory—and Allah will help thee a mighty helping." (48 : 1)

And after referring to the disappointment of the hypocrites and the idolaters and the aid and allegiance the faithful rendered to the Prophet and promising more victories in the future the chapter closed with an important announcement that Islam shall be made triumphant over all other religions of the world.

That the truce of Hudaibiya turned out to be the triumph of Islam is clearly borne out by the fact that while at Hudaibiya the Prophet commanded 1500 Muslims, on the occasion of his advance on Mecca a year and a half later he was accompanied by ten thousand comrades. The fact was that the state of warfare which had so far prevailed between Muslims and non-Muslims had created a wide gulf between them. The general malice towards Islam would not permit pagan Arabs to mix with Muslims and become acquainted with their Islamic virtues. For the first time since the inception of the Islamic movement this gulf was bridged over for a considerable length of time by this truce. Now the non-Muslims had the chance of coming into free contact with the Muslims and they came to realise how all those who had been under the Prophet's moral influence were edified and raised to a higher plane of life and culture. The false impressions created by hostility concerning the Prophet vanished. The nobility of his nature and the beauty of his morals and teachings were now revealed to them. They realised that they had been the dupes of misrepresentation. Thus impressed with the sublimity of the Prophet's ideals, and the purity of his comrades' lives, they began to embrace the faith in large numbers.

Thus the words of the Divine revelation which the Prophet had received on his way back from Hudaibiya which we

purposely omitted to quote in 179 found fulfilment.

180. "That Allah may rectify for thee that which hath gone before of the faults attributed to thee and that which remain behind." (48 : 1)

The faults imputed to him through malice proved to be baseless insinuations and his real personality shone out in all its glory and the richness of its beauty. The words "that which remains behind" also contained a promise for the future. Any accusations thought against him in any future time, shall not be allowed to stand, but shall similarly be washed away. Strange are the ways of God, and little wonder that the history of Islam should repeat itself. May God bless Allama Iqbal, how his words stand testimony for the ages to come

ہے عیاں شورش تاتار کے افسانے سے ؛ پاسباں مل گئے کعبہ کو صنم خانے سے

translated thus : the episode of the invasion of the Turk on Islam furnishes the evidence that the custodians of the *Ka'ba* shall ever and ever be recruited from the image-worshippers (turned into Muslims).

(i) **The pilgrimage of Muhammad**

According to the terms of the truce of Hudaibiya, Muhammad started with two thousand of his followers to perform the postponed pilgrimage when the sacred months arrived. For full seven years the sight of Mecca was denied to him. He had his chance now. His vision was going to be realised now. The Quran refers to it in these words :

181. "Surely, Allah hath in truth made good to His Messenger the vision : Surely you will enter the Holy mosque, if it please Allah, in safety ; you will shave and cut your hair without any fear." (48 : 27)

While the Muslims performed circuits round the sacred house with the shoute of "*Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik*" (I am here O God) the Quraish who had vacated the city and stationed themselves on the surrounding hills witnessed this scene from the heights. Two thousand Muslims prayed with the Prophet, for seven years he had not prayed there. The Quraish looked on from their position on the hills and wondered at these

prayers. "What sort of men were these Muslims. They did not drink wine, they did not gamble, they had no singing girls and no intermingling of the sexes in carnal pleasures. Their only song was "God is great, God is great, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His apostle." Surely, there were scores of deities still enshrined in the *Ka'ba* were they asleep? Could not they revenge themselves on Muhammad who was denying their existence? Or were they utterly powerless? The foundations of unbelief were shaken to their depths. This Umra or shorter pilgrimage was going to be the greatest propaganda for the faith.

Muhammad returned to Madinah and was quite happy that his dream had been realised, and sure of the fact that he had left a lasting impression on the minds of the Quraish. Many of the stalwarts of the Quraish who had fought against him all these years like Khalid bin Walid, Amr bin A'as and Osman bin Talha embraced Islam. The tree of Islam was now firmly rooted and it was a matter of time only when it would further grow, spread out, and overshadow all other faiths.

182. "He it is who sent His Apostle with guidance and true religion that He may make it supercede all other faiths and Allah is enough for a witness.......This is their similitude in the Torah and in the Gospel, like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong, it then becomes thick and it stand on its own stem, filling the sowers with wonder and delight and filling the unbelievers with range at them." (48 : 28-29)

The similitude of a seed growing into a big is tree is recorded in Mark 4 : 27-28 thus :"

"The seed should spring and grow up, He knoweth not how : for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

In like manner Islam was preached by the Holy Prophet ; the seed seemed to human eye lost in the ground but it put forth its shoots and grew and became strong until it was able to stand on its own trunk and bear fruit and its worst enemies recognised its existence and its right to live. Its growth and

strength filled the Prophet and his companions with wonder and delight, while its enemies were confounded and raged furiously within their own minds.

j) The Fall of Mecca

The prophecy about the fall of Mecca had already been pronounced on several occasions while the Prophet was yet at Mecca before his Flight. In one place the Quran declared in self-evident terms thus :

> 183. "Surely, their purpose was to scare thee off the land that they might expel thee from it, but in that case they will not tarry behind thee but a little." (17 : 76)

The time for its fulfilment had arrived now. Muhammad ordered the mobilization of the forces and in a short time ten thousand men were arrayed beneath his standard. He was resolved on this occasion to put an end to the machinations of the Meccans. The expedition set out and entered Mecca practically unopposed as the inhabitants were unable to place an army in the field against him and the Muslims entered the city in triumph.

What an epoch-making triumph it was, a decisive event in the history of the world. The town which stood for years the bulwark of paganism, the enemy of Islam, fell without an effort. The chivalry of heathendom was prostrate before the valour of the Muslims. For years it withstood the Prophet and his mission, persecuted him and his followers, reviled and stoned, and cast him forth an outcast and wanderer in the land. It plotted against him and launched forth cohorts of foot and horse, steel-tipped, mail-clad, to overcome and slay him. What was his revenge?

In the hour of his bloodless victory, of his elevation, of his triumph, how did he treat those who spurned and mocked him and hunted him with spear and bow? Now they were there standing before him. "What do you think" asked he. "I am going to do to you?" They knew his tenderness ever since his childhood, his large-heartedness and his magnanimity which had distinguished his character during a period of forty years

before his claim to prophethood. They cried with one voice : "You are a noble brother, and the son of a noble brother." He said : As my brother Joseph had said :

184. "There shall be no reproof against you this day. Allah may forgive you and He is the most merciful of the mercifuls." (12 : 92)

"Go, you are free".

He forgave them, forgave every trespass, every evil, persecution and injury. God was to him the Merciful and Compassionate, so, the God's Messenger, gave mercy and bestowed compassion on the enemies now pleading for forgiveness and grace. World history fails to produce the like of the Prophet's generous forgiveness of such arch-enemies. No example of such magnanimous forgiveness is met in the life of any other prophet. How apt is the declaration of the Quran when it says :

185. "We have not sent thee but as a mercy to the worlds." (21 : 107)

The people were spared, not so the idols. The Muslims swept the *Ka'ba* clean of every vestige of paganism. As he helped in the removal of all images he recited the verse of the Quran :

186. "Truth has come and falsehood has disappeared ; surely, falsehood is bound to disappear." (17 : 81)

Mecca was conquered, but a far greater conquest and one beyond the reach of Muslim arms was accomplished by the general amnesty granted to the town. It disarmed all opposition. The Meccans witnessed with their own eyes how all the Divine promises held out to the Muslims while the latter were yet groaning under the torture of their enemies had at last come true. The combind forces of opposition could do little harm to Islam. This furnished conclusive testimony to the righteousness of the cause and remove whatever doubt was lurking in their hearts. All opposition vanished and the truth of Islam went deep into Meccan hearts. They entered the fold in flocks. The Quran refers to this in these words :

187. "When there comes the help of Allah and the victory and thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in hosts, then celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His protection and forgiveness (for them). Surely He is oft-returning to mercy." (110 : 1-3)

Here the Prophet is told that when that great victory is attained which will induce people to embrace Islam not by ones and twos but in big companies, then he should glorify Allah for bringing about this wonderful change and ask for Divine forgiveness for those very people who were his greatest enemies. "Forgive thine enemy" is very easy to utter but history fails to point out a practical instance of forgiveness of one's deadliest enemies under such circumstances, a forgiveness of not only their crimes against him and his followers, but also a forgiveness through prayer to the Lord, of all the enormities and sins which those enemies have committed against the Divine Being and for which Divine punishment would surely have overtaken them had it not been for the Prophet's intercession which he is commanded to exercise on their behalf. What better testimony the Prophet's life could produce to make him deserve the title which the Quran gives him as *Rahmatun-lil-'Alamin* (mercy of the worlds).

k) Battle of Hunain

The idolaters outside Mecca made their last stand at Hunain, a valley at about three miles from Mecca. This time the Muslim army outnumbered the enemy. Their excess in number led them to vanity with the result that they could not face the enemy's archers who shot volleys of arrows from every point of vantage which they had occupied before the Muslim army entered the valley. The onslaught was terrible and the Muslims could not face it and took to flight. This caused confusion throughout the Muslim ranks. Even the *Muhajirin* and the *Ansar* joined in the general retreat. The Prophet with a handful of faithful followers was left exposed to the advancing hosts to the enemy. But the Prophet's presence of mind and cool courage saved the situation exactly as it did in the battle of Uhud. The enemy was fast sweeping upon him and he was

almost alone but that did not cause the faintest ripple on the serenity of his mind. Was he not secure under the Omnipotent protection of the Mightiest of the mighty? The same unfailing source of solace, unswerving faith in Divine help, and firm conviction in the final triumph of his cause sustained him now as ever. With the enemy storm whirling along on to him, he shouted repeatedly at the top of his voice : "I am the Prophet of Allah, there is no falsehood about it." At this clarion call again a miracle took place. The fleeing Muslims like thunder and lightning rallied to the call. Their lost courage was not only recovered but redoubled. The proud conquerors of a moment before were now grovelling in the dust. The Muslims attacked them so fiercely that the enemy forgot all their plans and boasts. They fled leaving their women and children and all their property behind. The Quran gives a vivid picture of this encounter in these words :

188. "Certainly, Allah helped you in many battles and on the day of Hunain when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating. Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Apostle and upon the believers and sent down hosts which you did not see and chastised those who disbelieved and that is the reward of the unbelievers." (9 : 25-26)

l) The Expedition of Tabuk

The rise of Islam in the land of Arabia alarmed the neighbouring Roman Empire. The Romans could not tolerate the growing power of Islam. When the news reached Syria that the whole of Arabia was giving allegiance to Islam, the religious jealousy of the Romans was aroused. Intelligence was received that the Ceasar had assembled a large force to crush the power of Islam and that all the Christian tribes in Arabia had joined hands with him, God had already informed Muhammad.

189. "You will soon be called upon to meet a people of great strength ; you will have to fight them and they will submit. If then you obey, Allah will give you a great reward." (48 : 16)

The Prophet summoned all the tribes to come to the defence of their territory. But a number of obstacles stood in their way. The journey was long and the weather was burning hot. Crops were ready for the sickle, and above all, fear of facing the well-disciplined and trained forces of the Roman empire lurked in many hearts. Besides such a long journey, could not be undertaken on foot and the provision of horses and camels was very limited. Inspite of all these handicaps the Prophet was able to muster as army of 30,000 all bent on serving God.

Tabuk lies midway between Madinah and Damascus at a distance of fourteen days journey. Here the Muslim army encamped. The Prophet found the border peaceful and the enemy unprepared for resistance. He never wanted to be an aggressor. The Quran says ;

190. "Fight in the path of Allah against those who fight against you but do not transgress." (2 : 190)

The enemy did not want to fight and so the Prophet after waiting for twenty days returned to Madinah without an encounter. But before he left Tabuk he made some treaties with the Christian tribes on the borders in order to secure peace in that region.

The Quran describes how the hypocrites behaved when they were ordered to join this expedition. We shall deal with this episode under the chapter "The Hypocrites and the Prophet."

9

The Prophet Muhammad And The Jews

When the Prophet of Islam migrated to Madinah he found that the Jews formed a formidable element of the population of Madinah. Trade coupled with usury had made them rich. The two Arab tribes who invited Muhammad to their city, the Aus and the Khazraj, generally borrowed money from them. In point of education and in almost every other respect the Jews were ahead of their neighbours. So, the Prophet entered into an agreement with them guaranteeing them protection of person and property, of liberty and peace.

There were three Jewish tribes inside and round about Madinah, living in well-fortified houses built in isolated quarters. They were Bani Qainuqa, Bani Nadhir, and Bani Quraiza. These were the descendents of ancient Jewry that had migrated into Arabia after its second Dispersion. The social, moral, and spiritual conditions of these people at the time of the Prophet is already described in connection with the story of Moses. (in my book, "*Lessons from the Stories of the Quran*"). The Holy Quran condemns them in these words :

191. "O people of the Book ! Be not unduly immoderate in your religion and do not follow the low desires of

people who went astray before, and led many astray and drifted away from the right path." (5 : 77)

Here are some more verses of the Quran addressed to them which invite them to recognise the Prophet whose advent had been foretold in their own scriptures and to follow him.

192. "O people of the Book ! Indeed Our Apostle has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the mission of the apostles lest you say : There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner. So, indeed there has come to you a giver of good news and a warner, (and do not forget that) Allah has power over all things." (5 : 19)

Several centuries had elapsed since the appearance of any apostle in any country when the Arabian Prophet made his appearance. The scriptures of all revealed religions had also undergone alterations, so much so that the mission of the earlier prophets had entirely ceased to exist and influence the people, and the need of a world Prophet to revive and consolidate the older teachings and guide them to the way of God was felt everywhere. The Jews of Madinah were also expecting the advent of a prophet. The Quran refers to his in the following verses :

193. "And when there came to them a Book from Allah varifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they recognised, they disbelieved in it. So, Allah's curse be on the disbelievers." (2 : 89)

194. "O people of the Book ! Why do you disbelieve in the messages of Allah while you witness them and why do you confound the truth with falsehood and hide the truth while you know." (3 : 69-70)

195. "O people of the Book ! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah, that we shall not associate aught with Him and that some of us shall not take others for Lords besides Allah. But if they turn back, then

say : Bear witness that we are those who submit to Allah," (3 : 63)

196. "These whom We have given the Book recognise him as they recognise their sons and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know it." (2: 146)

Inspite of these injunctions and warnings the Jews were jealous of the Prophet, for he was not an Israelite and they not only tried to discredit him and his revelations but adopted various ingenious plans to injure the cause of Islam. Some embraced the faith with the set purpose of undermining it from within and bringing the believers out of the fold of Islam.

197. "And a party of the people of the Book say : Believe in that which has been revealed to those who believe in the first part of the day and disbelieve in the latter part, perhaps they may go back." (3 : 71)

By this plan they wanted to create the impression on the believers that the religion of Islam could not be the true one, otherwise the Jews who possessed the scriptures could not have apostatised after they have embraced Islam. By such devices they wanted to win back those who had come over to Islam. But God says :

198. "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths and Allah will not consent save to perfect his light though the unbelievers are averse." (9 : 32)

(a) **The Expulsion of Bani Qainuqa.**

What was jealousy in the beginning grew in course of time into positive enmity. The Bani Qainuqa were the first to clash with the Muslims and thus breaking their compact. They resolved on fighting out the issue with the Muslims and betook themselves to fortified strongholds. The Muslims laid siege to their forts and made them surrender. For the breach of their agreement the penalty of banishment was imposed upon them.

This took place just after the battle of Badr. The Quran refers to this in these words :

199. "They will not fight against you in a body save in fortified towns or behind walls ... like those before them." (50 : 14-15)

(b) **The Expulsion of Bani Nadhir.**

Another Jewish tribe, the Bani Nadhir, were in secret league with the Quraish of Mecca. After the battle of Uhud their insolence became unbearable. The Prophet wanted to renew the agreement made with them on his entering Madinah. They refused to do it expecting help from the hypocrite leader Ibn Ubay. Their refusal to renew the agreement was tantamount to a declaration of war. Therefore the Prophet laid siege to their strongholds and made them surrender and banished them from Madinah. The Quran refers to this event also in these words :

200. "He it is who caused those who disbelieved of the people of the Book to go forth from their homes at the first banishment. You did not think that they would go forth while they were certain that their fortresses would defend them against Allah. But Allah came to them whence they did not expect and cast terror into their hearts. They demolished their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers. Therefore take a lesson O you who have eyes ! And had it not been that Allah had decreed for them the exile. He would certainly have chastised them in this world and the Heaeafter they shall have chastisement of the fire." (59 : 2-3)

(c) **The End of Bani Quraiza.**

The Bani Nadhir did not keep quiet in their exile at Khaibar. They roused the Quraish at Mecca and the Bedouin tribes in the desert against Islam and the Bani Quraiza at Madinah were prevailed upon to enter into an alliance with the confederates who were laying siege to Madinah. It was an hour of great danger for the Muslims. Ten thousand enemies of Islam were

on the other side of the ditch exerting their utmost to cross it and hypocrites were bent on mischief within. At this time the treachery of Bani Quraiza added enormously to the difficulties of the Muslims. When the battle of *al-Ahzab* (the Confederates) ended in favour of the Muslims, the Bani Quraiza could not be left unpunished for their treachery, which, had it been successful, would have finished Madinah and Islam. Siege was therefore laid to their fortresses and after some resistance they surrendered. Sa'ad bin Mu'az was made the arbitrator on their own request to pronounce their punishment. Had they left the decision with the Prophet he would have imposed the same penalty as he did in the case of Bani Nadhir. But they relied on Sa'ad who was their former ally before the Prophet's entry into Madinah. He applied their own law as given in *Duetero-nomy* 20 : 13-14 for the vanquished foe. The judge was of their own choice and the sentence was in strict conformity with their sacred law. The verdict was carried out. The Quran makes mention of these events in the following verses :

201. "And He drove down those of the people of the Book who backed them from their fortresses and He cast awe into their hearts. Some you killed and some you took captive and He made you heirs in their lands and their dwellings and their property and to a land which you have not yet trodden, and Allah has power over all things." (33 : 26-27)

(d) The Conquest of Khaibar.

The apparently humiliating truce of Hudaibiya gave a fresh hope to the Jews of Khaibar, a place 200 miles north of Madinah, where the ring-leaders of the Bani Nadhir had taken refuge, to direct another expedition against Madinah. The Prophet getting apprised of their conspiracy gave no time to get it matured and advanced on them with an army of 1500 men. The colony of Khaibar consisted of many strongly fortified fortresses and the Jews relied much on their invincibility. But the Muslim assault was actuated with a strong faith in God, with the result that the Jews had to surrender after a tough

resistance. On their request the Prophet left them in possession of their lands and property on condition that they would pay in tribute half the produce of their lands annually. In return to this lenient treatment they conspired to poison the Prophet and even after the plot was exposed in which most of them were involved and deserved the penalty of death, the Prophet allowed them to go free, hoping that forgiveness might change their attitude towards Islam.

The victory thus granted to the Muslims at Khaibar was foretold at Hudaibiya when the revelation came to the Prophet :

"And rewarded them with a near victory." (Quote : 182)

The near victory prophecied in the Quran was obtained at Khaibar soon after the Prophet's return from Hudaibiya. A reference to the conquest of Khaibar is also clearly made in verse 27 of chapter 33 of the holy Book which says : " He made you heirs to a land which you have not yet trodden."

10

The Phophet's Dealings With The Christians

While the Prophet was still at Mecca a deputation of 16 Arab Christians from Bani Taghlib came to him and heard the Quran and embraced Islam. They went back and preached the faith to their people It is with regard to these people the Quran says :

202. "Thou wilt certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe to be those who say we are *Nasara* (the Nazerites). This is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly. And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle thou wilt see their eyes over-flowing with tears on account of the truth they recognise. They say : Our Lord ! We believe so write us down with the witnesses of truth. And what reason have we that we should not believe in Allah and in the truth that has come to us. while we earnestly desire that our Lord should cause us to enter with the righteous." (5 : 82-84)

It was due to this revelation that the Prophet suggested to the first batch of emigrants to go to Abyssinia where Negus, a

Christian monarch ruled. When the chapter Mary was recited by Ja'far, the leader of the emigrants before the king, the words of the Quran so impressed him that he wept. He subsequently became a convert to Islam. This story is described under the chapter "The Emigration." When the news of the death of Negus reached the Prophet at Madinah, he held a funeral service for him.

The Deputation from Najran.

Najran is situated between Mecca and Yemen and is a vast open territory inhabited by the Christians in the time of Muhammad. When the Prophet sent them invitation to accept the faith they sent their leaders and priests to Madinah. The Prophet accommodated them in the mosque and allowed them to hold their service within its precincts according to their own practice. Friendly diccussions took place between them and the Prophet about Jesus and Islam. A description of this discussion is already recorded in our book "*Jesus in the Quran*". It was on this occasion that the following verse was revealed :

203. "Say : (O Muhammad) O ye people of the Book ! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah, that we shall not associate aught with Him and that some of us shall not take others for Lords besides Allah. But if they turn back, then say : Bear witness that we are those who submit to Allah." (3 : 63)

When they were not convinced by reason, the Prophet invited them to take to the invocation called "*Mubahila*" by which each contending party prays earnestly to God that the Course of God may overtake the party that insists on falsehood. The Christian deputation wanted intermission for a day to consider the challenge. The next day they informed the Prophet that they had decided not to pray against him. They believed in the efficacy of prayers, for such was the teaching of Jesus. They saw the righteousness of the Prophet and were doubtful of their own belief. Hence they dared not invoke curses upon themselves with their own tongues, while

they knew that the Holy Prophet was too generous to curse them. Therefore they adopted the wiser course of not calling with their own mouths for destruction to overtake them. Had they considered the Holy Prophet as an impostor, as their biased co-religionists do now-a-days, they would not have had the least fear in accepting the challenge. The Quran refers to this mode of settling the dispute where reason fails :

> 204. "But whoever disputes with thee in this matter after what has come to thee of knowledge, then say : Come, let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and your people and our people, then let us humble ourselves and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars. Most surely this is the true explanation—there is no God but Allah. He is the Mighty, the Wise. But if they turn back, then Allah surely knows the mischief-mongers. (3 : 60-62)

But the seed which the Prophet sowed in the heart of these Christians of Najran bore fruit very quickly and when Khalid was sent by the Prophet to Najran to call the people to Islam, most of them turned Muslims.

11

The Prophet And The Hypocrites

At Mecca the Prophet was subjected to the persecution of his fellow-citizens only but in Madinah the opposition to his cause was three-fold. The Meccans on one side were bent upon destroying him and on the other side the Jews who could not tolerate the growth of Islam started conspiring against him and thirdly, inside the Muslim society itself a wave of opposition had set in from the side of the hypocrites. These were the men who had not the pluck to come out into the open. They joined the faith with the object of undermining it from within. Abdullah bin Ubay was at their head. One can keep himself on guard against an open enemy but enemies disguised as friends are very dangerous, and hard to deal with. The Prophet was thus confronted with every form of opposition and intrigue at Madinah. The Quran gives an elaborate description of their behaviour with the Prophet :

205. "And there are others among the people who (to deceive thee) say : We believe in Allah and the last day. In truth they are not believers. Feign would they deceive Allah and those who believe. The fact is, themselves do they deceive though they are not conscious of it. There is a disease in their hearts and Allah intensifieth it. For them there is severe

chastisement, for, they have lied. When it is said to them : Do not spread disorder in the land, they say : We are the people who promote order. Mark ! It is they who are the promoters of disorder but they do not realise it. When it is said to them : Believe as others have believed, they say : Shall we believe in the manner of fools ? (Take it), they are themselves veritable fools although (in their arrogance) they do not realise it. And when they meet those who believe they say : We hold to your faith, and when they are apart with their evil guides they say to them : We really are with you, we were but mocking. Allah shall surely mock at them and let them loose to eddy about in their perfidy." (2 : 8-15)

206. "When the hypocrites come to thee, they say : We bear witness that thou art most surely Allah's Apostle. Allah surely knows that thou art His Apostle and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are downright liars. They make their oaths a shelter to turn away from Allah's way. It is indeed an evil thing which they do." (63 : 1-2)

207. "And they say : We are obedient ; But when they go off thy presence, a party of them decide by night upon doing otherwise than what thou sayest." (4 : 81)

208. "These are they who take the unbelievers as their guardians in preference to believers. Do they seek honour from them ? Then (let them know that) all honour belongs to Allah." (4 : 139)

209. "(O Prophet) It is a fact of which thou art aware that these people had once in the past attempted to stir up disaffection in thy following and contrived in diverse ways to make things difficult for thee till the truth was out and the will of Allah prevailed to their great chagrin." (9 : 48)

210. "If a success betide thee it grieves them. (On the other hand) if a reverse overtake thee, they say : we were

careful to guard ourselves in advance, and they turn away their backs (rejoicing)." (9 : 50)

211. "And they swear (by Allah) that they are indeed of you while they are not of you but they are a people who indeed are simply flabbergasted. (Their mental state due to their fear and hatred of the Prophet is so strained at the moment that) if they find a place of refuge for them such as a cave or a similar hiding place, they will assuredly repair to it and even rush to it." (9 : 56-57)

212. "And among these (the hypocrites) there are some who wish to annoy the Prophet (by their slander). They say that he lends an easy ear to one and all." (9 : 61)

213. "The hypocrites are afraid lest a full chapter of the Quran should be sent down concerning them to lay bare before them what exactly lieth in their hearts. Say (to them) Go ahead with your jesting but (rest assured that) Allah will certainly bring to light what you are afraid of." (9 : 64)

214. "The hypocrites, whether men or women, go but one way. They enjoin what is evil and forbid what is good and are close-fisted (in the matter of spending anything in the way of Allah). They have neglected to be mindful of Allah and so Allah hath left them in neglect. Indeed the hypocrites have overstepped the bounds of uprightness." (9 : 67)

Just before the battle of Badr when it was decided to meet the enemy at Badr, the Prophet had only a handful of men to fight the enemy and there were misgivings about the result of the conflict. At such a critical moment the hypocrites tried to spread consternation among the believers. The Quran refers to it in these words :

215. "The hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a diseas say : Their religion has misled them (with overconfidence). But if any trust in Allah, then surely Allah is Mighty, Wise." (8 : 49)

On the occasion of Uhud when 3000 Meccans had come upon Madinah to crush the Muslims. Ibn Ubay, the leader of the hypocrites, deserted with 300 of his men and the Prophet was left to fight with only 700 of his men against four times their number. This manoeuvre made some of the Muslims also entertain the idea of deserting the army on account of superior enemy forces but they were won over by some of the staunch followers of the Prophet and the calamity was averted. The Quran reminds the believers of this incident in these words :

216. "When two parties from among you had determined that they should show cowardice and Allah was the guardian of them both and in Allah should the believers lay their trust." (3 : 121)

When the Bani Nadhir became insolent and refused to renew the treaty with the Prophet, they had relied on the help of the hypocrites. But when they were besieged, no one came to their help, and they had to surrender and were forced into exile.

At the battle of the Trench when the Arab tribes led by Abu Sufian laid siege to Madinah, the hypocrites made excuses to join in the defence of the town on the lame pretext that their houses lay exposed to the enemy's attack. The Quran has not omitted to permanently put on record their betrayal on so grave an occasion.

217. "There the believers were tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking. The hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say : Allah and His Apostle did not promise us victory but only to deceive and a party of them said : O people of Yathrib, there is no place to stand for you here, therefore go back ; and a party of them asked permission of the Prophet saying : our houses are exposed. They only desired to fly away." (33 : 11-13)

The hypocrites did not hesitate even to fabricate a grave accusation against the Prophet's wife Ayesha, the righteous, to

create a split among the Muslims. The Quran refers to it in these words :

218. "Surely they who fabricated a lie are a party among you...and as for him who took upon himself the main part thereof shall have a grievous chastisement." (24 : 11)

While the expedition was being organised for Tabuk, the hypocrites took advantage of the excessive heat to refrain from enlisting. Their real motive in staying behind was to stir up mischief at Madinah in the absence of the Prophet. The Prophet gave them permission to stay away, knowing that their presence, instead of strengthening the moral of the army would weaken it by their underhand dealings. The Quran makes reference of this incident in these words :

219. "They only ask leave of thee who do not believe in Allah and the day Hereafter, and their hearts are in doubt, and in their doubts they waver ...... Had they gone forthwith thee, they would not have added to thee aught save corruption and they would certainly have hurried about among you, seeking to sow dissension among you, and among own people there are those who in hearken to them and Allah knows the unjust." (9 : 45-47)

220. "Those who were left behind were glad on account of their sitting behind Allah's Apostle, and they were averse to striving in Allah's way with their property and their person and said : Do not go forth in the heat. Say : The fire of Hell is much severe in heat. Would that they understand." (9 : 61)

The hypocrites built a mosque of their own outside Madinah with a view to providing a rendezvous for their conspirators against Islam. This mosque was built before the expedition of Tabuk. The Prophet was invited to perform its opening ceremony by saying his prayers therein. He promised to do this on his return from Tabuk. In the meanwhile he came to know through Divine revelation that it was not a mosque but a hot-bed of intrigues for the ruination of Islam. Hence on

his return it was demolished. The Quran records this in these words :

221. "And those who built a mosque to cause harm and for unbelief and to cause disunion among the believers and an ambush to him who made war against Allah and His Apostle before; and they will certainly swear : We did not desire aught but good; and Allah bears witness that they are most surely liars. Never stand in it." (9 : 107)

When the arch-hypocrite Ibn Ubay died, his son Abdullah, a sincere Muslim, asked the Prophet for two favours, to gift his own shirt for a shroud and to perform the funeral service. He granted both the requests for the sake of Abdullah who was a devout Muslim. His closest companions invited his attention to ,the following verse of the Quran :

222. "Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them, even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times. Allah will not forgive them : this is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Apostle and Allah doth not guide the transgressing people." (9 : 80)

The Prophet replied that God had given him a choice and that he would ask forgiveness for him for over seventy times if only by his doing so, forgiveness could be extended to the dead man. Then he offered prayers for him.

What breadth of sympathy ! doubtless Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the one personage in human history who is entitled on the score of facts and deeds to be acclaimed as "*Mercy for the worlds.*" Ibn Ubay was the same man who had led the hypocritical movement against him for the whole of his life and thus was not only one of his worst enemies but at the same time a most dangerous one for the safety of the Muslims because he was aware of all the movements of the Muslims and deceived them at most critical junctures. Here is an instance how the Prophet's heart was overflowing with tenderness and mercy not only for his friends but equally for the bitterest of his foes !

The fury of the hypocrites abated with the death of Ibn Ubay. Many of them abandoned their hypocrisy and joined the Muslims in sincere repentance, but those who still insisted in their disbelief were ostracised from the Muslim brotherhood. No *zakat* was taken from them nor were they allowed to take part in any of the Muslim armies. They were made known to all so that the Muslims might guard themselves against their mischief and the order was given not to perform prayers on their funeral.

223. "And never offer prayer for any one of them who dies and do not stand by his grave. Surely, they disbelived in Allah and His Apostle and they shall die in transgression." (9 : 84)

224. "O Prophet ! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be hard against them." (66 : 9)

As a result of a cautions and realistic effort and attitude of the Muslims, the trouble caused by the hypocrites came to an end, in the very life time of the Prophet.

12

The Prophet And His Followers

Jesus had said that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and among his own relatives. So has Voltaire the French Pilosopher had said that no man is hero to his valet. Persons who are always in intimate contact with any great man know his weaknesses too and therefore he cannot command their admiration as he would from a respectful distance. But in the case of the Prophet it is just the reverse. We find that his Divine mission was accepted not only by his countrymen but also by his own family. In fact his wife, Khadijah, was the first to believe and honour him. His freedman Zaid, his cousin Ali, and his friend Abu Bakr, persons who knew the Prophet both in public and private life in the most intimate manner possible, were the foremost in accepting him as the true Prophet of God. Then slowly this number began to increase inspite of inhuman persecutions the new converts had to face, and their devotion to him was ever on the increase as days rolled on.

Opposition, persuasion and even brutal force could not stem the tide of righteousness from flowing into the new channels of purity, unity, and brotherhood. It swept away all barriers, obstacles, and impediments as mountain torrent sweeps

everything that lies in its way. Virtue had at last triumphed over vice and the forces of good had ultimately put an end to those of evil. Humanity was liberated from the grip of evil, and superstition, being scared away by the doctrines of truth, and piety, took to wings and flew away forever. Hard and fast came the revelations of the Almighty through His Messenger and Prophet, whose logical reasonable and convincing arguments had at last opened the eyes of a degraded and corrupted nation. The Arabs awoke to the great realisation that they had been asleep for centuries in the dark dungeons of ignorance and vice. Thus the Holy Quran, the sacred Book of Allah was revealed to humanity at a time when its need was most felt. It came direct through one man and one alone — from one who lived in the broad daylight of history. The Gospel of truth struck awe and terror through the hearts of men. Overcome by its irrefutable truths, its eloquence, elegance, and magnificence, its purity and loftiness of thoughts, the Arab nation determined to atone for its past misdeeds and folly, with the result that at the time of the Holy Prophet's death, the whole of Arabia was converted to Islam.

Thus within a few years, Arabia had undergone a marvellous change. Instead of atheism, deism, and fanaticism, men began to worship the One True God, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient and the Omnipresent. Instead of autocracy and feudalism it laid the foundation of truest democracy and brotherhood, the like of which the world had never seen. Instead of the horrible and cruel treatment of women, and children, men began to respect and love them. Instead of savages and brutes, the Arabs became the torch-bearers of science and culture. Instead of a nation split up into innumerable tribes and clans, they united and formed into a single vast nation acquiring practically unlimited power and domination. Instead of a corrupt and degraded society, it gave birth to a highly intellectual and moral society which at once became the admiration and wonder of the whole world.

The high standard that was set for the Muslims is described in the following verses :

225. "By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend benevolently of what you love most"

and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it (3 : 91)

226. "O believers ! Be careful of your duty to Allah with the care that is due to Him and do not die until you are Muslims, and hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together, and be not disunited." (3 : 101-102)

227. "You shall certainly be tried respecting your wealth and your lives and you shall certainly hear from those who were given the Book before you and from those who are polytheists much blasphemy, and if you are patient and guard yourselves against evil, surely this is one of the affairs that should be determined upon." (3 : 185)

228. "And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and life and fruits (of your labour) and give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them say : Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return." (2 : 155-157)

229. "Say : (O Prophet) If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your faults and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (3 : 30)

The demand of God from the Muslims is summed up in the following verses :

230. "Say : (O Prophet) if your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your mates and your kinsfolk and your property which you have acquired, and trade the dullness of which you fear, and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and striving in His way, then, wait till Allah brings about His command, and Allah doth not guide the transgressing people. (9 : 24)

The companions of Muhammad stood the test and they gave their all to establish the Kingdom of God on earth

The Quran speaks of them in high terms in the following verses :

231. "Remember the favour of Allah on you, when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so by His favour you became brethren, and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it." (3 : 102)

232. "Those who believe are stronger in love for Allah." (2 : 165)

233. "And (they) give away wealth out of love of Him to the near of kin, and the orphans and the needy and the stranded travellers and the beggars and for the emancipation of captives, and keep up prayer and pay zakat, and fulfil their promises when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in times of conflict." (2 : 177)

234. "Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it seemly in your hearts and He has made hateful to you unbelief and transgression and disobedience." (40 : 7)

235. "The use to sleep but little in the night and in the morning they ask forgiveness and in their property is a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied good." (51 : 17-19)

236. "Surely, your Lord knows that thou passest in prayers nearly two-thirds of the night and sometimes half of it, and sometimes a third of it and also a party of those with thee." (73 : 20)

237. "And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness and when the ignorant address them, they say : Peace, and they who pass the night prostrating themselves before their Lord ! and standing, and they who say : O our Lord ! Turn away from us the chastisement of Hell ; surely the chastisement thereof is a lasting evil, and surely it is an evil abode and an evil place to stay. And they

who, when they spend, are neither extravagant for parsimonious and keep between them the just mean, and they who do not call upon another god with Allah and do not slay the soul which Allah has forbidden except in the requirement of justice, and they who do not commit fornication...and they who do not bear witness to what is false, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly, and they who, when reminded of the communications of their Lord do not fall down there-at deaf and blind, and they who say : Our Lord! Grant us in our wives and in our offsprings the joys of our eyes and make us guides to those who fear Allah." (25 : 63-74)

238. "Those are believers whose hearts thrill with fear when Allah is mentioned and when His communications are recited to them they increase them in faith and in their Lord do they trust, those who keep up prayer, and spend for others what We have given them." (8 : 2-3)

239. "Surely those who believed and fled their homes and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and lives and those who gave shelter and help...these are guardians of each other...these are the true believers ; they shall have forgiveness and an honourable provision." (8 : 72-74)

240. "And as for the foremost, the first of the emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in goodness ; Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them forever ; that is the mighty achievement." (9 : 100)

241. "Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this that they shall have Paradise. They fight in Allah's way, so, they slay and are slain, a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran, and who is more faithful of His covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the pledge that you have made, and that is a mighty achievement." (9 : 111)

242. "They who turn to Allah, who serve Him, who praise Him, who fast, bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah." (9 : 112)

243. "In it (that is the Prophet's mosque) are men who love to be purified and Allah loves those who purify themselves." (9 : 108)

244. "Those who fly for Allah's sake after they are oppressed We will most certainly give them a good abode in the world and the reward of the Hereafter is certainly much greater." (16 : 41)

245. "When the believers saw the Confederates they said : This is what Allah and His Apostle promised us and Allah and His Apostle spoke the truth and it only increased them in faith and submission." (93 : 22)

This verse refers to the prophecy about the battle of the confederates when the combined forces of Arabia invaded Madinah. The true believers did not despair but it inspired greater faith in them and the prophecy came true. (See the battle of the Ditch already described).

246. "Surely those who swore allegiance to thee did but swear allegiance to Allah ; the hand of Allah is above their hand." (48 : 10)

247. "Certainly Allah was well-pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to thee under the tree and He knew what was in their hearts, so, He sent down tranquillity on them and rewarded them with a near victory." (48 : 18)

248. "Those with him (Muhammad) are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves, thou wilt see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and His pleasure; their marks are on their faces being the effect of their prostration." (48 : 29)

249. "Those who were driven from their homes and their possessions, seeking grace of Allah and His pleasure, and assisting Allah and His Apostle ; these it is that

are the truthful. And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them, love those who have fled to them and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given and prefer them above themselves though poverty may afflict them." (59 : 8-9)

250. "Those, who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay zakat, enjoin good and forbid evil." (22 : 41)

251. "Those who spend benevolently in ease and in straitness and those who restrain their anger and pardon men ; and Allah loves those who do good to others, and those who when they commit an indecency or do injustice to their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness of their faults—and who forgives the faults but Allah ? And who do not knowingly persist in what they have done." (3 : 133-134)

252. "Those who help one another in goodness and do not help one another in sin and aggression." (5 : 2)

253. "Bearers of witness with justice, and let not the hatred of a people incite (them) not to act equitably." (5 : 8)

254. "Maintainers of Justice, bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against themselves or their parents or near relatives." (4 : 135)

255. "(Who) Gives full measure and weight with justice." (6 : 153)

256. "(Who) Avoids most suspicion and do not spy on others or backbite others." (49 : 12)

257. "They strive with one another in hastening to good deeds." (3 : 113)

258. "There glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings men whom merchandise nor sellings diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer, and the giving of zakat ; they fear a day in which the hearts and the eyes shall turn about, that Allah may give them the best award of what they have

done and give them more out of His grace, and Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases without measure." (24 : 36-38)

259. "Those who fulfil the promise of Allah and do not break the convenant and those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined, and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil recknoning ; and those who are constant, seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer and spend benevolently out of what We have given them secretly and openly and repel evil with good." (13 : 20-22)

260. "Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (and say) Our Lord ! Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to thee." (3 : 190)

The last verse quoted above shows that the Muslims were not only made God-conscious in their daily activities but they also cultivated the habit of probing into the mysteries of the universe that surrounded them leading them to discover scientific truth which later on made them the torch-bearers of civilization in the world. The simple shepherds and wandering Bedouins of an arid peninsula like Arabia whose poverty was only equalled by their ignorance were transformed as if by a magician's wand, not only into the most fervent and sincere votaries of a living creed but into the founders of empires, builders of cities, collectors of libraries, the world's greatest generals, statesmen and scientists. No prophet of the world was charged to reclaim such lowly specimens of humanity and no followers of any prophet rose to such eminence as the companions of the Prophet. This was indeed due to the excellence of that great teacher who thoroughly purified them of all the dross of humanity and made perfect the light of God within them. God Himself in the words of the Quran gives the verdict about them thus :

261. "Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Allah." (9 : 100)

May God shower His choicest blessings over them all !

13

The Miracles Of The Prophet

Miracles are those occurrences that are displayed in contravention of some apparent law of nature. Prophets were given the power of performing miracles by God as proof of the truth of their mission. Prophets who preceded Muhammad were raised for the guidance of particular communities and the miracles they performed and which were witnessed by their compatriots were meant to convince them of the claim of those prophets to Divine inspiration. But the mission of Muhammad was intended for mankind at large and for all ages to come. Therefore it was necessary that he should be given a miracle which should last for all time bearing testimony to the Divine character of his mission. With this end in view, he was kept untutored and unlettered. This fact was well-known to all his people with whom he had spent forty years of his life before the call came to him. A reference to this is made in the following verse :

262. "Indeed I have lived a life-time among you before it. Do you not then understand." (10 : 16)

Inspite of his illiteracy the revelations which he gave out in the form of Quranic verses are the everlasting miracles of language, substance, and effects, bearing solid testimony to the

genuineness of his claim. This fact of his illiteracy is also referred to in the Quran in these words :

263. "And thou didst not read before it any book, nor didst thou transcribe anything with thy right hand, for, then could those who say untrue things have doubted. Nay, these are clear communications in the eyes of those who are granted knowledge and none deny Our communications except the unjust. And they say : Why are not signs sent down upon him from his Lord ? Say : the signs are only with Allah and I am only a plain warner. Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to thee the Book which is recited to them. Most surely there is mercy in this and a reminder for a people who believe."

(29 : 48-51)

In the above verses the Quran itself claims that its revelation is a standing miracle of the Prophet who never knew before how to read or write anything and yet he has presented to the world a Book containing the truths of life, having no rival to it in any language, ancient or modern, for the beauty, force, and sweetness of its diction, for clearness, depth, and profoundness of its similes, metaphors and other figures of speech, for the immediate penetrating and lasting effect of its admonitions, for its richness of ideas, for its unimpeachable style, its unparalled grace, and a comprehensive sweep of its subjects, and for the enlightenment and complete code of life it provides for those who to tread the right path.

The Quran was revealed piece-meal, so that under the varying circumstances through which the Prophet had to pass, the Divine revelation might be a source of strength to his heart. There are people who criticise that the Quran is a disorderly collection and contains such passages which have no connection with one another. This criticism was anticipated by the Quran and was put in these words :

264. "And those who disbelieve say : Why has not the Quran been revealed to him all at once. Just so, in order

that We may steady thy heart therewith and We have arranged it well in arranging." (25 : 32)

This verse contradicts in clearest terms the false notion that the Quran was arranged by Abu Bakr or Osman, for its arrangement according to this verse was a part of the Divine scheme, brought about in the life-time of the Prophet who was the recipient of this Divine revelation. If the Quran is correctly understood the arrangement of its passages would appear to follow in correct sequence, as well as the arrangement of its chapters. Those who try to present the Quran on the basis of chronology which is traditionally most uncertain, are trying to do a job quite in opposition to the intention of the Divine Author God Himself and shall never be acceptable to those who believe it to be the word of God.

The Holy Prophet claimed the Holy Quran to be a sign, a miracle, and a miracle indeed it was, is, and shall ever be. It is unique in every respect. God has challenged the whole world of non-believers in it to produce a similar book—the whole of it or even a chapter of it, nay, the Divine challenge extends, even to a single verse—but still no scholar of Arabic has had the courage to try his mettle against it.

265. "Tell them that even if men and Jinn should combine together to producing a book similar to the Quran, they shall not be able to do so even if they all helped one another." (17 : 88)

266. "Do they say, he has forged it ? Say : Then bring ten similar chapters and call upon whom you can besides Allah (to help you), if you are true in your claim. But if they do not answer you, then, let them know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge." (10 : 13-14)

267. "Do they say : he has forged it ? Say : Then bring a chapter like it and invite whom you can (to help you) besides Allah if you are true in your claim." (10 : 38)

268. "Do they say, he has forged it? Nay, they do not believe. Then let them bring a verse like it, if they are truthful." (52 : 33-34)

269. "And thus did We reveal to thee an inspired Book by Our command. Thou didst not know before what the Book was nor what the faith was, but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants, and most surely thou showest the way to the right path." (42 : 52)

The chief characteristic of this Holy Book in which no other book can claim equality is the wonderful transformation which it accomplished and it is to this characteristic only that it lays claim in its very commencement when it says :

270. "This Book, undoubtedly is a guide to those who guard against evil and wish to be righteous." (2 : 2)

That the transformation brought about by it is unparalled in the history of the world is admitted on all hands, for, if the Holy Prophet was "the most successful of all the prophets and religious personalities" (vide *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* 11th edition, Art. Quran). This success was due to no other cause than the Quran and the Prophet working out its tenets in practice. Its injunctions swept off the most deep-rooted evils like idolatry and drunkenness so as to leave no trace of them in the whole of Arabia. It welded the warring elements of Arab society into one nation and made an ignorant people the torch-bearers of knowledge and sciences. Besides, every word of the Quran gives expression to Divine Majesty and Glory in a manner which is not approached by and other sacred Book. It is why the challenge of the Quran remains unanswered to this day. The Quran likewise, is indestructible. It can revert the fate the other religious books have met at the hands of desecrators. God has assured time and again :

271. "Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian." (15 : 9)

272. "Most surely it is an honoured Quran in a book that is protected." (56 : 77-78)

273. "Nay, it is a Glorious Quran in a guarded tablet." (85 : 21-22)

274. "And the words of thy Lord have been accomplished truly and justly. There is none who can change His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (6 : 116)

275. "And recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord. There is none who can alter His words." (18 : 27)

These verses contain a most wonderful prophecy whose fulfilment is and shall always continue to be a standing miracle bearing testimony to the Divine origin of the Quran and to the truth of the mission of the Holy Prophet.

The Book names itself as "Quran"—that which is read or should be read. It is the most widely read book in the world. It is read round the clock as the earth goes round its axis. Muslims are spread all over the continents of the world and they repeat the Quran in their five daily prayers from morn to night as the sun rises and sets on every longitude of the earth every day, heralding the hours of prayer to all the corners of the globe. Besides, non-Muslims are also studying it all the world over either in the original or in translation. As an example it may be pointed out that in one of the recent years the copies of Mr. Picthall's English translation of the Quran were obtained by the needy in larger number in America than any other book in English published in that country. This fact was disclosed in one of the American journals. How extraordinarily fitting is the name of the Book to this every-day-world-phenomenon can only be imagined.

There are many other names given to this book in the Quran itself. They describe its characteristics, its significance, peculiar features and its aims and objectives. A few of them are as follows :

1. *Al-Kitab* (the complete book) (2 : 2)

2. *Al-Furqan* (the distinction between truth and falsehood) (25 : 1)

3. *Al-Tanzil* (the revelation) (26 : 192)
4. *Al-Hukm* (the Judgement) (13 : 37)
5. *Hablullah* (the covenant of Allah) (3 : 102)
6. *Al-Rahmat* (the Mercy) (17 : 82)
7. *Al-Ruh* (the Spirit) (42 : 52)
8. *Al-Bayan* (the explanation) (3 : 137)
9. *Al-Nur* (the Light) (7 : 157)
10. *Al-Haq* (the Truth) (17 : 81)
11. *Al-Burhan* (the Argument) (4 : 175)
12. *Al-Mou-i-zat* (the Admonition) (10 : 57)
13. *Al-Hikmat* (the Wisdom) (17 : 39)
14. *Al-Majeed* (the Glorious) (85 : 21)
15. *Al-Mubin* (One making things manifest) (12 : 1)
16. *Al-Fasl* (the Decision) (86 : 13)
17. *Al-Mutahhar* (the Purified) (80 : 13)
18. *Mutashabeh* (Comparable in all its various parts) (39 : 23)

The Holy Quran is a compendium of Divine messages brought by the Holy Spirit Gabriel and delivered in words to the Holy Prophet, to be transmitted to mankind. It contains all those right directions which were delivered to the previous prophets through the same agency and preserved in its pages.

276. "An Apostle from Allah reciting pure pages from the Book wherein are all the truths (revealed to previous prophets) (98 : 2-3)

It was not the Holy Prophet who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit ; he merely repeated the words conveyed to him. The Holy Quran says :

277. "The messenger-spirit hath brought it down from thy Lord with truth." (16 : 102)

278. "And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The faithful spirit hath come down

with it on thy heart that thou may be of the warners in plain Arabic language." (26 : 192-195)

279. "Do not move thy tongue with it making haste to learn it. Surely on Us devolves collecting of it and the reciting of it." Therefore when We have recited it follow its recitation." (75 : 16-18)

280. "We will make thee recite, so thou shalt not forget." (87 : 6)

The Holy Quran as the word of God needs no champion, no advocate and certainly not an apologist. It speaks for itself. It puts forward its claims, gives reasons and arguments in support of them and throws a challenge for all times—a challenge which still today has remained unaccepted. On the contrary, although Europe and America are prominently Christian and Christianity as it is preached by the churches has always been antagonistic to Islam, there are unbiased right-thinking European and American scholars who have, after studying it, even in untrustworthy translations, have admitted in their non-Muslim environments the just claims of the Quran. We give below a few of these remarks made by the critics as well as appreciating scholars of Europe and America.

1. George Sale who was out to expose the Holy Quran as "a manifest forgery" could not but admit :

"The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent and in many places, specially where the Majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent." (Sales Preliminary Discourse p. 48)

2. Palmer, another translator of the Quran says :

"The best of Arab writers have never succeeded in producing equal in merit to the Quran itself." (Palmer's Introduction 55)

3. Von Goethe, the German poet and philosopher has said in his book "*West-Oestiicher Divan :*

"The Koran is a work with whose dullness the reader at first is disgusted, afterwards attracted, and astonished by its

charms, and finally irresistibly ravished by its many beauties....In the end it enforces our reverence. Its style according to its contents and aims is stern, grand, and terrible...ever and anon truly sublime....This Book will go exercising through all ages most potent influence."

4. John Devonport says :

"From a literary point of view the Koran is the most poetical work of the East....It is universally allowed to be written with utmost purity and elegance of language in the dialect of the tribe of the Koresh, the most noble and polite of all the Arabs. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic language and abounds with splendid imagery and the boldest metaphor...is generally vigorous and sublime.

"It was to the Koran, as considered as a permanent miracle that Muhammad appealed as the chief confirmation of his mission, publicly challenging the most eloquent men in Arabia then abounding in persons whose sole study and ambition was to excel in eloquence and composition, to produce even a single chapter that might compete therewith.

"The Koran is the general code of the Muslim world, a social, civil, commercial, military, judicial, criminal, penal, and yet religious code. By it everything is regulated, from the ceremonia of religion to those of daily life, from the salvation of the soul to the health of the body, from the rights of the general community to those of each individual, from the interest of man to those of society, from morality to crime, from punishment here to that of the life to come.

"Among the many excellences of the Koran are two eminently conspicuous—one being the tone of awe and reverence which it always observes when speaking or referring to the Deity to whom it never attributes either human frailties or passions ; the other, the total absence throughout it of all impure, immoral, and indecent ideas, expressions and narratives etc. blemishes, which, it is much to be regretted, are of frequent occurrence in what Christians style the Old Testament. So exempt indeed is the Koran

from these undeniable defects that it needs not the slightest castration and may be read from beginning to end without causing a blush to suffuse the cheek of modesty itself." (Devonport's *Muhammad and the Koran* pp 48-49)

5. Steingass Says :

"We may well say that the Quran is the grandest book ever written....Sublime and chaste where the sublime truth of God's unity is to be proclaimed....Its merit as literary production should perhaps not be measured by some preconsidered maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste but by the effects it produced on Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well-organised body animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history....But Muhammad made a still greater and more decisive step towards creating a literature for his people...In those Suras in which he regulated the private and public life of the Muslims, he originated a prose which had remained the standard of classical purity ever since." (Translation Hughes *Dictionary of Islam*, pp. 527-530)

6. Dr. Hertwig Hirschfield says :

"The Quran is unapproachable as regards convincing power, eloquence, and even composition...and to it also was indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world." (Hirschfield : *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Quran* 8-9)

7. Bosworth Smith says :

"Illiterate himself, scarcely able to read or write, he was yet the author of a book which is a poem, a code of law, a book of common prayer, and a Bible in one....It was the one miracle claimed by Muhammad—his standing miracle

ven with a system of the wisest, the most learned, and the most enlightened jurisprudence that ever existed in the world."

12. In the Popular Encyclopaedia Division viii p. 326 we read:

"The language of the Quran is considered the purest Arabic and contains such charms of style and poetic beauties that it remains inimitable. Its moral precepts are pure. A man who should observe them strictly would lead a virtuous life."

13. In the *Hubert Lectures* the following passage appears :

"The Law of Islam contains admirable moral precepts and what is more, succeeds in bringing them into practice and powerfully supporting their observance."

14. Dean Stanley, the eminent Christian cleric in his *Eastern Church*, p. 279 writes :

"The code of the Quran makes doubtless, a deeper impression than has been made on Christianity by the code of the Bible."

15. David Urquhart in the Introduction to volume I of his clever book "*The Spirit of the East*" gives a brief description of Islam which cannot fail to appeal :

"Islam as a religion teaches no new dogmas, establishes no new revelation, no new precepts, has no priesthood and church government. It gives a code to people and a constitution to the state enforced by the sanction of religion."

16. Rodwell in his preface to the translation of the Quran says :

"It must be acknowledged too that the Koran deserves highest praise for its composition of the Divine nature in reference to the attributes of power, knowledge and universal providence and unity—that its belief and trust in one God of heaven and earth is deep and fervent." (p. 15)

17. Dr Johnson says :

"If it (the Quran) is not poetry—and it is hard to say whether it be or not—it is more than poetry. It is not

history nor biography. It is not anthology like the sermon on the mount, not metaphysical dialectics like the Buddhist Sutras, nor sublime homiletics like Plato's conference of the wise and foolish teachers. It is a prophet's cry, semitic to the core, yet of a meaning so universal and so timely that all the voices of the age take it up, willing or unwilling, and it echoes over palaces and deserts over cities and empires, first kindling its chosen hearts to world conquest, then gathering itself up into a reconstructive force that all the creative light of Greece and Asia might penetrate the heavy gloom of the Christian Europe, when Christianity was but the queen of night."

We have given the opinions of learned scholars and of men who are reported among their countrymen as great thinkers, and who do not subscribe to the faith promulgated by the Quran, and yet are so profoundly impressed with its excellences that they could not but give vent to their admiration. This itself is a proof that the Quran is indeed a miracle of the Prophet for all time—past, present and the future.

There are many more incidents in the life of the Prophet which took place in a most extraordinary manner and are considered no less than miracles but he never made them as the basis of his claim to prophethood. Nevertheless the Quran bears testimony to their happenings. We give below only such events as are thus permanently preserved in the Quran.

281. "Glory be to Him who conveyed His Servant by night from the sacred mosque to the mosque far off—the one whose precincts have been blessed—in order that We might show him some of our signs." (17 : 1)

The sacred mosque is the *Ka'ba* and the far off mosque is the temple of Solomon at Jerusalam towards which Muhammad was turning his face in prayers while at Mecca.

In these days of space flights when men are travelling in space at the rate of thousands of miles per hour with the power of scientific knowledge and it is being suggested that man may be, in the time to come, converted into some energy and projected from place to place and reconverted into original form at

the destination, there should be no difficulty in understanding how Muhammad was conveyed bodily to Jerusalem and back again in a few minutes. The power of the spirit is much more potential than the power of scientific knowledge, and the purpose of this conveyance is given "that We might show him some of Our signs."

This verse has been the basis of the belief that Muhammad was taken into the heavens in the very *presence* of the Lord Almighty and received certain favours which were specially reserved for him. Technically it is called "*Me'raj*" which means "Ascension", and there is a big controversy on this subject to determine whether this ascension was corporal or spiritual, and there is plenty of literature in support of both the presumptions. We do not propose to go into this controversy here. It is enough to understand that all prophets are told things about the realities underlying and overlying the various phenomena of the universe, which are far more difficult to understand than what the scientists and philosophers assert. How are the prophets to be satisfied in their hearts that what they are being told is the absolute truth ? There is only one way and that is actual experience, and this is possible only in a spiritual vision. Abraham had it, Moses had it, and Muhammad had it.

The fact of God speaking to Muhammad through the Spirit Gabriel is itself a great miracle which has been delivered to us in the shape of the Quran. What Muhammad saw on this occasion of his ascension was not a mere dream. It was the Glory of God revealed to the most glorious of men. Muhammad's eyes and ears were, for the time being, freed from the shackles of time and space and he beheld the sun, the moon, the earth and the heavenly bodies go round, as one would behold them if one was in space outside the solar system and not bound to this earth. He saw the prophets of all ages and what they had accomplished. He saw the angels of God carrying out their duties and the laws of God working to their destined end. His soul was praying to God for years before his mission for an explanation of the universe and now for ten years he had been listening to Gabriel and learning his lessons.

Here was an ocular proof of all he had been told and all he had been promised. He had enemies on this earth who wished to put an end to his life but he had God as his friend who wanted to show him what his end was going to be. and what would their own end be.

The verses that follow the first verse relating to the journey of the Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem contain commandments similar to those which were given to Moses and which later on formed the basis of the Muslim state at Madinah.

In chapter 53 entitled the Star the spiritual experiences of Muhammad during his ascension are allegorically presented. Muhammad is the spiritual star by whose light all mankind are to be guided. not because he is Deity (God forbid) but because his light is the light of God and his path the path of God.

282. "Most surely thou guidest to the right path." (42:52)

There is another big miracle attributed to Muhammad in the verses quoted below. In the whole history of miracles this is the only miracle of which a contemporaneous record exists. It thus stands unique even among the miracles of the Holy Prophet.

283. "The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend assunder. And if they see a sign they turn aside and say : a powerful enchantment, and they call it a lie and follow their low desires and every affair has its appointed time." (54 : 1-3)

The phenomenon of the moon rending assunder is an incident related by a number of the companions of the Prophet and these reports are accepted as correct by the well-known Traditionists Bukhari and Muslim and there is no room to doubt the trustworthiness of these reports. The unbelievers calling it a powerful enchantment shows that this unusual phenomenon did happen at least apparently to those who witnessed it. Rejecting it as untrue on the basis of scientific impossibility cannot be taken into account, as every miracle is a scientific impossibility, and the Quran records several miracles that were performed by the prophets who preceded

Muhammad and which are also mentioned in the books which go by their name; and as we have proved already that the Quran is the word of God and not the product of the mind of the Holy Prophet and therefore whatever is described in it cannot be untrue, nor has ever been proved to be untrue or even not enlightening or beneficial to mankind.

Of course we shall have to discover what was the significance of this miracle. It signified the departure of the power of Meccans. The moon represented the power of the idolatrous Arabs and its being cleft into two parts signified the departure of that power through the Holy Prophet's instrumentality.

True prophecies are also counted as miracles and the Quran abounds with prophecies that have come true during the life-time of the Holy Prophet, for instance 1) the vanquishment of the idolaters and the triumph of Islam ; 2) the return of Muhammad to Mecca as a conqueror ; 3) the defeat of the Meccans in the several attempts they made to crush the Muslims ; 4) the victory of the Romans over the Persians etc. etc.

Again the battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Ditch in which the Muslims inspite of facing overwhelming odds succeeded in driving the forces of evil, were indeed nothing less than miracles and this they were able to achieve by the aid of supernatural power that were sent to help them. The Quran bears testimony to this fact as we have already seen in the descriptions of these battles. These miracles cannot be denied to the Prophet even though he has been denying for himself possession of any supernatural powers as we find in the following verse :

284: "Say (O Prophet) I do not control any benefit or harm for my own self except as Allah pleases." (7 : 188)

The Arabs were a superstitious people and if the Holy Prophet had so desired, he could have claimed the possession of great supernatural powers, but he did not, as he wanted to make his position perfectly clear that he was no more than a human being. He was commanded to say :

285. "Say : I am only a man like yourselves." (18 : 116)

But when man submits himself entirely to the Will of God and subordinates his own judgement and desires to Divine Will and says :

286. "My prayers and my sacrifices, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds." (6 : 162)

God becomes his limbs and joints as the Quran speaks of Muhammad :

287. "The hand of the Prophet which is above their hands is the Hand of God." (48 : 10)

288. "Whatever thou castest, not thou but God has cast." (8 : 17)

Muhammad even as a man equipped himself with Divine morals and reproduced God's attributes within human framework. What further eminence is there for man when God becomes his limbs and joints and His Almighty power is invested into them. There is no wonder if miracles are performed by men of such calibre.

14

The Prophet's Domestic Life

The domestic life of the Prophet may be divided into four periods. Upto the age of twentyfive he led the life of a bachelor. From twentyfive to fifty four vears he lived in a married state with one wife. From fiftyfour to sixty he contracted several marriages and lastly from sixty till his death he did not contract any new marriage.

In the earliest period of his life he remained a complete celibate. His worst enemies could not point to a single weakness of his character when challenged later.

289. "Indeed I have lived a life-time among you before this; do you not then understand ? (10 : 16)

Even Sir William Muir, his adverse critic had to admit :

"All authorities agree in ascribing to the youth of Mohamet a modesty of department and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca."

In the Arab society of his time there was no social sanction against immoral life and profligacy was the order of the day. It was among such people that the Holy Prophet led a life of transcendent purity.

At the age of twenty five he married a widow fifteen years his senior, the lady Khadijah and lived with utmost devotion to her till she died when he was fifty years of age. After her death he married a very elderly lady named Soudah who was a widow of a faithful companion of his, who had to fly to Abyssinia from the persecution of the Quraish. Thus the main part of his life from twenty five to fifty four was an example for his followers that monogamy was the rule in married life.

In his struggle at Madinah a series of battles were fought upto eight years of the Hijrah which reduced the number of his followers to a considerable extent. It was during this time that the Holy Prophet contracted all the marriages which appear objectionable to the European critics, but which neither friend nor foe looked upon with disapprobation at the time. And how could they do so, for they saw them as acts of compassion and not as expressions of indulgence. Except young Ayesha all the others were widows.

And how did he pass his days in Madinah? He had to defend himself and the small band of his followers against the enemies of Islam who were constantly intriguing against him and coming upon him in ever increasing numbers, and life at Madinah was never secure during the first eight years of the Hijrah. It was a life-and-death struggle that he had to carry on with the whole of Arabia aflame against him, with a meagre means of subsistence. Under such circumstances a life of ease and luxury could not be available to any.

If his days were passed during this period so strenuously working for defence and security, the training and education of his followers and the propagation of Islam, he spent his nights in prayers as attested by the Quran.

290. "Surely thy Lord knows that thou passest in prayer nearly two-third of the night and sometimes half of it and sometimes a third of it." (73 : 20)

This conclusively proves that he was farther away from indulgence of every kind.

Besides the protection of widows, which example his followers also emulated and which safeguarded the Muslim society from moral corruption, there were other considerations that led to some of his marriages. He married Safia and Jawairiyya for political reasons, the motive being conciliation of the Jews and the Bani Mustaliq to which tribes they belonged respectively. In the case of Zainab, the divorced wife of his freedman Zaid, he had to marry her in order to remove the false notion that divorce degraded women. Her case is further considered with respect to the Quranic verses to follow.

The Prophet was an exemplar to his followers and to the generations of Muslims yet to come, both men and women. For the men's section he had organised a circle styled "*Ashab-us Suffa*" (companions of the platform) who helped him in the propagation of his teachings, but where was he to get the women who could carry out the same function except from his own household ? This was another important cause of his marriages at this time with the elderly women of different tribes. His wives served him as the feminine counterpart of his companions of the platform. The intricacies of the problems of women could best be solved through his own wives who could approach him freely without exposing themselves to any indecencies in all querries of the feminine world: The Quran speaks to them in the following words :

291. "And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes of the signs of God and His wisdom." (33 : 34)

It is obvious that this teaching work could not have been accomplished on a vast scale if the Prophet had contented with one wife only at this stage. Moreover teachings dealing with domestic life would have become unreliable if according to the criterion of the authentic traditions of the Prophet, they had been reported by one person only and not corroborated by others.

Further, Islam strictly forbids mixed gatherings of the sexes and lays doun rules and regulations for the conduct of each sex in society, Modern world is reaping already the fruits of sex

leniencies and unrestricted mixed gatherings. The Prophet envisaged this and did not give the slightest chance for the creation of such a state of society among his followers. He did not allow women to gather around him even for the purposes of learning his teachings and their propagation which he valued above every other thing from the beginning of his mission and for whose sake he had sacrificed his all. The only way open to him to bring about transformation of feminine society was through the women of his household and hence the contingency for his several marriages at this stage.

With the conquest of Mecca in 8 A.H. internal warfare practically came to an end normal conditions of peace were restored. From 8 A.H. to the end of his life when he was the supreme ruler of the whole of Arabia and there was none to stop him from doing what he wished, he could have gathered all the beauty of Arabia in his household if he wanted to indulge in sensual pleasures. But he did not contract any new marriage during this period and this sets all doubts at rest as to the motives of his marriages.

Now we shall study further the Quranic verses which throw light on the domestic life of the Prophet,

292. "O Prophet ! Say to thy wives : if you desire this world's life and its embellishments, then come. I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing. But if you desire Allah and His Apostle and the latter abode, then (know that) Allah has surely prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward." (33 : 28-29)

After the extirpation of the Jews from Madinah, the Muslim community had become well-to-do and their wealth increased. During such times it was quite natural that the wives of the Prophet should desire to be furnished with the necessities of life better than what they had previously enjoyed. But just at this time this revelation came enjoining the strictest simplicity of life upon them. These strictures could not emanate from an impostor or from a man of the world whose power and wealth were increasing daily. If the Prophet had allowed his

wives to share in the general prosperity of the community, there could not have been the least objection. But he received a revelation which deprived him and those most closely related to him of those material benefits which others seek and acquire. The splendours of this world could be obtained by and were not forbidden to any Muslim. But such transitory vanities were not to be admitted in the household of God's Prophet. As he possessed the means, his wives could be allowed to depart with rich and ample gifts if such was their desire. This passage also throws light on the objects of the Prophet's marriages, for, if his object were sensual enjoyment, he could not have been ready to sacrifice the ease and comfort demanded by mere carnal desire to the retention of that Spartan simplicity enjoined upon his household. It should be noted to the credit of the Prophet's wives that none of them took advantage of this choice offered to them.

293. "O wives of the Prophet ! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the chastisement shall be increased to her doubly, and this is easy to Allah, and whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and does good, we will give to her reward doubly and We have prepared for her an honourable sustenance."

(33 : 30-31)

Not only the Prophet's wives were denied the comforts of life which were available to other Muslim ladies, but any indecency on their part was to bring upon them double the ordinary punishment. Let the critics of the Prophet ponder on this. Could this be the work of an impostor ? In their case the punishment is increased because being in the Prophet's house they had a better chance of being guided aright and of passing their lives in unsullied purity. This injunction does not mean that there was any instance of indecency on the part of any of the Prophet's wives.

For their denying themselves the ordinary comfort of life by remaining in the Prophet's house which they could have obtained elsewhere, they are promised a double reward:

294. "O wives of the Prophet ! You are not like any other of the women; if you will be on your guard, then be

not soft in your speech lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn (for anything from you) and speak a good word and stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the days of ignorance, and keep prayer and pay the zakat and obey Allah and His Apostle. Allah only desires to take away uncleanness from you. O people of the household ! and to purify you a thorough purifying."

(33 : 32-34)

The Prophet's wives were not like ordinary women nor their marriage an ordinary marriage in which only personal or social considerations counted. They had a special position and special responsibilities in the matter of guiding and instructing women who came into the fold of Islam. While they were to be kind and gentle to all, they were to be guarded on account of their special position lest the vulgar lot may misunderstand or take advantage of their kindness. The different ways of purifying themselves that are suggested are : 1) seeking nearness to God by regular prayer; 2) doing good to fellow-creatures ; 3) observing utmost simplicity in life; 4) avoiding every kind of indecency; 5) abstaining from displaying their charms to others and; 6) not inclining towards worldly desires. As the Prophet was an example to the Muslim men, so was his household to be an example of simplicity and purity to Muslim women.

295. "Surely, We have made lawful to thee thy wives when thou hast given them their dowers and whom thy right hand possesses out of those whom Allah has given to thee as prisoners of war." (33 : 50)

Unlimited polygamy was the rule of society during the Prophet's time. Plurality of wives is met with in the lives of many great religious personages who led lives of transcendent purity. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon among the Israelites had more wives than one. Some of the famous and revered sages of India also were polygamous. These prophets and sages were not led away by sensual desires to a polygamous life. Purity in all respects was the outstanding characteristic of their lives, and this fact alone is enough to condemn the attempt to defame them on the basis of their

resorting to polygamy. Why should the Prophet alone be criticised for contracting marriages under special circumstances which are already mentioned. As to the law, the limitation on the number of wives was fixed at the end of the seventh year of the Hijrah and the Prophet had married all his wives before that period. In the above verse he is told to keep those whom he had already married, for, they were required to recite, teach, make known and publish the things they learnt at home from the Prophet, the fountain-head of all knowledge and wisdom, as pointed out in quotation number 291, and its explanation.

296. "Thou mayest defer the turn of any of them that thou pleasest and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose turn thou hast set aside. This will be better that they may be comforted and they may not grieve and they may be satisfied with that which thou hast to give them. And Allah knows all that is in your hearts (O wives of the Prophet) and Allah is All-knowing, most Forbearing." (33 : 51)

In a Muslim household there is no room for a favourite wife, as in case of polygamy strict justice should be observed in the treatment of all wives. The Prophet also observed th rule of equality with his wives even in the rotation of conjugal rights. But considering that his marriages were mainly dictated by other than conjugal or personal considerations, the rotation could not always be observed, though he observed it as much as possible. This verse absolves him from absolute adherence to fixed rotation. Where the rotation for some reason was interfered with, it was permissible by another interference with the usual rotation to bring satisfaction to one who had been previously set aside. This was not only permitted but commended as tending to restore satisfaction, and cheer and comfort the eyes and hearts of those who were disappointed in their turn.

There was not much of worldly goods or satisfaction that the Prophet could give to them, but he was kind, just and true,

the best of men to his family and they all clung to him and wished to be in his company as much as possible.

> 297. "It is not allowed to thee to take women after this, nor to change them for other wives even though their beauty attract thee, expect any thy right hand should possess. And Allah is watchful over all things." (33 : 52)

When the Prophet's wives preferred to remain with him, forsaking all the ordinary comforts of life, limitation was placed upon the Holy Prophet also that he should not take any other wife beyond what he already possessed, nor to divorce any though there might be other beautiful women who might be willing to get themselves married to him.

As regards the Prophet's marriage with Zainab, the divorced wife of Zaid, his freedman and adopted son, much criticism has come from the European authors to blaspheme him. But the Quran itself provides enough material which fully answers their charges.

Zainab was the daughter of one of the aunts of Muhammad. She had been like a sister to him and he knew her from her childhood. If she was a model of beauty as European critics allege, her charms were known to Muhammad long before his marriage with her.

Zaid was a liberated slave of the Prophet and was so much attached to him that people called him Muhammad's son. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam. In Arab society of those days a slave, though emancipated, was looked down upon, but under Islam slaves and free men were all equal in the eyes of God according to verse 50 : 13. The Prophet wanted to set the example of equality by arranging the marriage of Zaid with his own cousin the lady Zainab. He proposed to the brother of Zainab, who was her guardian at the time, that she should be given in marriage to Zaid. Both brother and sister were averse to this match but God approved of Muhammad's proposal. God had His own plans as yet unknown even to Muhammad himself. The plans of God are wide and decisive and no man can avert His decree.

The revelation came about this proposed match in the following words :

298. "It behoves not for a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their affair when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter, and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he surely strays off a manifest straying." (33 : 36)

Hence neither Zaid nor Zainab had any choice. They were therefore married. But forced marriages are seldom lasting. It was so in this case. Zainab was boastful of her nobility which Zaid could not bear. He complained to the Prophet and the Prophet advised him not to divorce her but to bear with her. But in matrimonial matters the advice of elders is not always effective. As this union had become unbearable, Zaid was forced to divorce her. It was the will of God that it should be so. God ordered Muhammad to marry her. Muhammad thought that according to Arab custom to marry an adopted son's widow or divorced wife was not permissible. But God's command must be obeyed. God said that an adopted son was not a real son and his wife had not the status of a real daughter-in-law. The Arab custom must be abolished once and forever and Muhammad himself was chosen to set the example.

The Quran says :

299. "Nor has He made your adopted sons your real sons. These are your words spoken by your mouths, but Allah speaks the truth and He guides to the right path. Call them by their real father's names, that is more equitable in the sight of God." (33 : 4-5)

So, Zaid could no longer be called the son of Muhammad. As to the marrying his divorced wife, the revelation was also explicitly clear.

300. "And thou didst say to him whom Allah had blessed and whom thou hast blessed; keep thou thy wife and

be mindful of Allah, and thou wast keeping in thy mind what Allah was going to disclose and thou wast afraid of the people and it was more righteous that thou shouldst be afraid of Allah. Therefore when Zaid had had his want of her, We married her to thee that there might be no barrier upon the faithful in the marriage of their adopted sons when they had their want, and Allah's order was bound to be carried out. There is no harm in the Prophet doing that which Allah had ordained for him. Such has been the course of Allah with respect to those who had gone before and the command of Allah is a decree that is made absolute." (33 : 37-38)

It being lawful for the Prophet to marry Zainab, he should not have refrained merely for the sake of custom which deemed such union objectionable. In fact the Prophet's insisting at first that Zainab should marry Zaid and her yielding to it at-last only in deference to the Prophet's wishes, followed by disagreement and ultimate divorce, had given such a shock to Zainab that the only way to make amends was that the Prophet himself should yield to that which he had at first rejected viz., the taking of Zainab in marriage to himself. It was out of sympathy with Zainab's feelings and not from any desire on his own part that the Prophet married her, for, his own wishes previous to her marriage with Zaid were against it. But when she had shown her submission and faithfulness by accepting a match against her own desire, and it was Zaid now who would not retain her, the Prophet would no longer justifiably treat the lady's sentiment with indifference.

There was another scandal raised against Ayesha, one of the wives of the Prophet which is cleared by the Quran itself.

301. "Truly they who concocted the lie are a party from among you. Do not regard it an evil to you, nay, it is good for you. Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin; and as for him who took upon himself the main part thereof, he shall have a grievous chastisement. Why did not the believing men

and the believing women, when you heard it, think well of their own people and say : this is an evident falsehood. Why did they not bring four witnesses of it ? But as they have not brought witnesses they are liars before Allah. And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a grievous chastisement would certainly have touched you on account of the discourse which you entered into. When you received it with your tongues and spoke with your mouths what you had no knowledge of and you deemed it an easy matter, while with Allah it was grievous, why did you not when you heard it say : it does not beseem us that we should talk of it, glory be to Thee, this is a calumny. Allah admonishes you that you should not return to the like of it ever again if you are believers."

(24 : 11-17)

The incident referred to in the above verses took place when the Prophet accompanied by his wife Ayesha was returning from the expedition against Banu Mustaliq in 8 A. H. Ayesha was accidentally left behind on the last stage of the journey. She went out of the camp to answer the call of nature but when she returned she discovered that her necklace was missing. She again went out in search of it. In the meantime the camp was struck and her camel-driver started off with the empty houdah thinking that she was inside it. When Ayesha came back from the search there was no one left. It being dark, she sat down thinking when the mistake was discovered her camel-driver would come back. Safwan bin Kauthal had orders to remain in the rear to see that nothing was left behind when the march took place. It was daylight when he discovered Ayesha and seating her on his camel he joined the army at mid-day. The hypocrites always on the look out for some opportunity to injure the cause of Islam made this accident the basis of a slander against the noble lady. Ibn Ubay being the chief source of the slandering rumour. Ayesha was terribly shocked and fell ill. The Prophet was also in great embarrassment and was much annoyed

friendship and as the Prophet stood in the spiritual relationship of fatherhood to the believers his wives also should be respected as mothers to the believers and their marriages after the Prophet's death with any of the believers were therefore forbidden according to the following verse :

303. "It does not behove you...that you should marry his wives after him ever, surely this is grievous in the sight of Allah." (33 : 53)

One of the objects which the Prophet's marriages served was the faithful communications to all of incidents that play an important part in the life of a man but whose knowledge is limited to a man's family circle. The remarriage of any of the Prophet's widows would have surely impaired this object to a great degree as it would have had some effect upon the independence of opinion of the lady who enter into marital obligations with another man.

304. "O believers ! .... and when you ask of them (wives of the Prophet) any goods, ask of them behind a curtain : this is purer for your hearts and for their hearts ....there is no blame on them in respect of their fathers, no their sons, nor their brothers, nor their brother's sons, nor their sisters' sons, nor their own women, nor of what their right hands possess." (33 : 53, 55)

Strangers speaking to the wives of Prophet are asked to speak to them from behind a curtain. This restriction need not be observed by those who were closely related to them as pointed out in the closing verse. This was one of the rules of conduct to be observed with respect to the wives of the Prophet. Similar was the injunction to those who were invited to dinner by Prophet.

305. "O believers ! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless permission is given to you for a meal, not waiting for its cooking to be finished—but when you are invited enter, and when you have taken the food then disperse, not seeking to listen to talks. Surely,

this gives the Prophet trouble, but he forbears from you and Allah does not forbear from the truth."
(33 : 53)

The rules of refined social ethics it is necessary to teach today as it was with the uncultured Arabs whom the Holy Prophet had to teach in his day. Respect and delicate consideration for others are among the highest virtues.

306. "O Prophet, say to thy wives and daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their overgarments (when going abroad). It is more probable that they may be known and not molested, and Allah is Forgiving. Merciful. (33 : 59)

This injunction was given in consideration of the condition prevailing in the city of Madinah, for, the verses that follow immediately show that the hypocrites and others in whose hearts was a disease were inclined to stir up quarrels by molesting women. The use of the outer garment was intended to show that there were pure and chaste women who would not tolerate insult or ill-treatment. The ending of the verse reminding God's mercy and forgiveness makes it clear that this rule was not absolute. If for any reason it could not be observed God will forgive them. In all civilized societies whether in the East or in the West a distinctive public dress of some sort has always been a badge of honour and respectability both among men and women.

307. "O Prophet ! Why dost thou forbid thyself that which Allah has made lawful to thee. Thou seekest to please thy wives but Allah is forgiving and merciful."
(66 : 1)

This verse is made the basis of an attack on the character of the Holy Prophet by bringing in a concocted story of the Prophet's indulgence with the coptic Mary. Suffice it to say that this is another of those fables which are invented by those who seek to vilify the Prophet. This assertion is not supported by any authentic tradition of the Prophet. There are, however, many reports differing from one another regarding this incident

of the Prophet forbidding himself something which was lawful to him to please his wives. It is not necessary for us to go into these reports to find out the exact thing that was the basis of this revelation. But one thing is very clear from it, and that is, that the Prophet was so well-disposed towards his wives that he wanted to deprive himself of some lawful things in order to please them, which shows how lovingly and affectionately he treated his wives. This noble treatment is a lesson for the Muslims to keep in mind in their dealings with their wives. This noble treatment the well-know Tradition "the best of you is he who is most kind to his wife and I am kindest of you all to my wives." (Bukhari) is eloquent enough to support this view.

308. "And when the Prophet disclosed in confidence a matter to one of his wives and she divulged it to another and Allah made him to know it, he made known a part of it and avoided a part. So when he informed her of it she said : Who informed thee of this ? He said : The Knowing, the One aware informed me. If you both turn to Allah in repentance, as indeed your hearts are already inclined to this, and if you back up each other against him, then surely Allah is his guardian and Gabriel and the righteous among the believers and the angels too will back him up. May be his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive, faithful, obedient, penitent, adorers, fasters, widows and virgins." (66 : 3-5)

Who these two wives were and what was the matter in confidence which was disclosed, is not mentioned here. The words imply that the matter was of great importance as to the principal involved, but the details were not of sufficient importance for permanent record. What we stand in need of learning from it is not the actual incident but the noble moral lesson which it affords. If anything is told to us in confidence specially by one at the head of the State, we must not divulge it even to our closest friends. If confidence is betrayed the offence should be purged by sincere repentance. The Holy

Prophet's kind treatment to his wives was magnanimous. Though the matter was serious enough to cause harm to the Prophet, and opened the possibility of even divorcing them, he did not go beyond asking them to repent for their delinquency.

There is yet another point to be observed in this connection. The Prophet did not divorce any of his wives though he was given the choice to do so whom he did not desire and to marry others in their place, but when the wives refused to leave him notwithstanding the extreme austerity of his home life, he retained them which shows that all the qualifications that are mentioned here were met with in them.

The man who led his companions out of the darkness of vice, immorality and ignorance to the heights of purity and perfection, could not himself be in the darkness of impurity. Those who criticise him on the score of his marriages forget his precepts and example which worked the transformation among his people, and the necessity which led him to them. He is consoled by God Himself in these words :

309. Leave unregarded their annoying talk and rely on Allah and Allah is sufficient as a protector."
(33 : 48)

Before this chapter is closed, a brief account of all the marriages of the Prophet is given below for the information of our readers.

The Prophet's first marriage came about at the age of tewnty five with Khadijah who was then a widow of forty. Excepting Ibrahim all his children were born of Khadijah. She died three years before the Hijrah. At her death the Prophet was fifty years old. Though unlimited polygamy was the practice in Arabia, yet to the good old age of fifty five the Prophet had only one wife.

After Khadija's death the Prophet married Soudah, a widow of advanced age. She had emigrated along with her husband to Abyssinia. On their return the husband died on the way leaving her in a terrible state of destitution. The

Muslim community was very small and no one could give her a respectable shelter. So, she offered her hand to the Prophet who accepted it. This took place in the tenth year of the call at Mecca only.

Abu Bakr's daughter Ayesha was betrothed to Jubair, but he was not a Muslim and wished to get out of this engagement. At this time Ayesha had not yet attained puberty. The engagement was cancelled and she was betrothed to the Prophet, but the consummation of the marriage was postponed until she reached the age of fifteen years in 2 A. H. and until then she remained in her parent's house.

Hafasa, the daughter of Umar, was left a widow at the battle of Badr, her husband Khunais having been slain in action. Hafasa had a somewhat hasty temper and no one was agreeable to marry her. Therefore as a favour to his faithful companion Umar, the Prophet married her, in 3 A. H. In the same year Zainab, the widow of Abdullah bin Jahash, a martyr of Uhad, was received in the household of the Prophet but she died soon afterwards.

Umm-e-Salma, a widow of Abu Salma, who died of the wounds receive in the battle of Uhad in 4 A. H. was married to the Prophet. He was of fifty seven years of age when this marriage was contracted.

It must be remembered that the death roll at Badr, Uhad, and the treacherous murder of 77 teachers of religion by the pagan Arabs, had widowed nearly half the Muslim women at Madinah and the Prophet was not the only man who was contracting these marriages of protection and necessity. He was setting an example to his companions and they all had to take this extra burden on their heads. These were not marriages of pleasure but of absolute and dire necessity. Abu Bakr, Umar, Osman and many others had their share of this burden. Women could not be left to look after themselves and the punishment for fornication and adultery was very severe and humiliating.

The story of Zainab's marriage, the divorced wife of

Zaid, is already dealt with and there is nothing more to add to it here.

In the year 5 A. H. at the battle of Bani Mustaliq, a large number of prisoners both males and females fell into the hands of the Muslims. Among them was Jawairiyah, the daughter of the Arab chief Harith bin Dharar. Coming to the Prophet to ransom his daughter he embraced Islam along with his two sons. Jawairiyah's husband had already died in action. Her father married her to Muhammad as an honour to himself and his daughter and this marriage brought about the freedom of all the prisoners of the tribe of Banu Mustaliq. This marriage may rightly be called a marriage for the sake of charity and brotherly love. It was one of the deeds by which the Prophet won the hearts of the Arabs.

Safiah was the daughter of a Jewish chief, Hayye bin Akhtab, and the widow of another Jewish chief Kinana, who was killed at Khaibar. It was not fit for any Muslim to take a lady of such rank as a captive of war. The Jews had been a ceaseless source of trouble to the Muslims. To put a stop to their mischief the Prophet married her. Safiah loved the Prophet dearly and he returned her love. This marriage took place in 7 A.H.

Umme Habiba was a widow of Abdullah bin Jahash who had emigrated to Abyssinia and died there. The Prophet married her by proxy, and this also was a marriage to win over the unbelieving Quraish as she was the daughter of Abu Sufian, the chief of the Quraish. In fact it may be said that the conversion of Khalid and the weakening of Abu Sufian's opposition to the Prophet was greatly influenced by this marriage. It showed them that Muhammad was not their enemy but one who wished them well and it was a folly to fight such a good and honourable kinsman. She returned to Madinah from Abyssinia in 7 A. H.

In this very year, Maria, the Egyptian, was sent to the Prophet as a gift by the ruler of Egypt and the Prophet could not possibly hand her over to another, as it was against all kingly rules. She gave birth to a son named Ibrahim who died in infancy.

Maimuna was divorced by her first husband Harith. She then married Abu Rahm but was soon widowed. She offered her hand to the Prophet who married her in 7 A. H.

Till this time there was no law limiting the number of wives and unlimited polygamy was the order of the day. In the year 8 A. H. the revelation declaring the law of limitation to four wives was announced. According to this commandment Muslims who had more than four wives were forced to divorce the extra ones. But what about the Prophet ? He had ten wives at this time in his household. If he divorced his wives, who was to marry women of such a status ? There would be rivalries and bloodsheds and rival families would be fighting each other till their own end. New causes for war might arise among Muslims and people might boast their descent from the Prophet's wives. God therefore made the retention of his married wives lawful for the Prophet but commanded him to marry no more and directed his wives to marry nobody after him. This is the truth about the Prophet's marriages. He left nine widows and each of them led an exemplary chaste life till her death, dedicating herself to the service of Muslim women, solving their personal problems in the light of the Prophet's teachings.

15

The Prophet's Personal Traits

1. The Prophet as an Exemplar.

310. Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much." (33 : 21)

This verse points to a most significant truth and a distinguishing character of the Holy Prophet, viz., that he is the best exemplar and the highest model of virtue for the faithful. The very circumstance which is used as a point of objection by his opponents is the real beauty of his life. A sentimentalist would tell us that as a persecuted reformer at Mecca he offered a noble example but what he did as the head of the state at Madinah, fighting battles, contracting marriages, ordering the slaughter of his enemies, and doing many acts of a similar nature, would have been better if left undone. But the object of his advent was not to please sentimentalists by giving some moral precepts quite impracticable in the actual human life and by offering only a noble example of steadfastness under severe persecutions, but rather to give practicable rules of guidance to men living and working in the world and to illustrate them by his noble example,

If he had not led armies, he could not have served as a model for a general leading armies into battle; if he had not fought personally, he could not have been an exemplar to a soldier prepared to lay down his life in the cause of truth, justice and freedom; if he had not made laws for the guidance of his followers, he could never have been regarded as an outstanding example to a legislator; if he had not decided cases he could not have served as light to judges and magistrates; if he had not married he would have left men unguided practically in half of their every day duties and could not have shown how to be a kind and affectionate husband and a loving father; if he had not punished those who had been oppressing the weak and the innocent; if he had not overcome his persecuting enemies and forgiven them, if he had not overlooked the faults of those attached to him, he could not have been excellent exemplar and a perfect model as he is here pronounced to be. Indeed it is the distinguishing characteristic of his life that he not only gave practical rules of guidance in all walks of life, but he lived up to them himself very scrupulously.

Two more points are worth noting here. In the first place the Prophet's being an exemplar is a sufficient answer to all those who carp at him because the very necessity to guide men under varying mundane circumstances and conditions led him through all those circumstances. Secondly, the moral qualities which are latent within man remain in a dorment condition unless they are called into action. No one can claim the possession of a high moral quality unless he has had occasion to display it and acquit himself creditably in its display. The varying circumstances of the Prophet's life gave him opportunities to display those latent qualities providing his followers lessons of conduct in similar circumstances.

2. The Prophet's Lofty Character.

311. "And indeed thou standest on a lofty standard of character." (68 : 4)

This was not only an assertion, but the Holy Prophet had already won from his fellow-citizens of Mecca the recognition

of his sublime morality in as much as he had won the title of *Al-Amin* a title rarely conceded to anybody in the pre-Islamic days. The Arabs on account of their haughty spirit and tribal and family feuds, were perhaps the last nation that would have thus recognised the high qualities of a man who was neither a king, nor the chief of a tribe, nor a great warrior, nor a famous poet, so that flattery would have been the motive of the people in according him an enviable honour. *Al-Amin* signifies the one who may be trusted and by giving the Prophet that title the people expressed their high appreciation of his sublime morality, as if he was the one and only one as indicated by prefixing article "*Al*" (the) who could be trusted in all matters. His moral greatness was thus testified to by his wife Ayesha than whom none was more intimate with the Holy Prophet who said : "*His morals are the Quran*" meaning that all pictures of sublime morality depicted by the Holy Quran afford really a glimpse of the moral greatness of the Prophet.

Just as the Quran is a code of high morals for the development of the manifold faculties of man, similarly the Prophet's life is a practical demonstration of all those morals. Thus a Muslim has a two-fold guidance - the Holy Quran in the way of perfect precepts, and the Prophet's life as a perfect example.

Sincerity was the key-note of the Prophet's character. No work was too low for him. All his actions and movements were characterised by simplicity and homeliness. He was simple in his food, in his dress, in his dwelling place, and had no attractions for worldly comforts. In all his habits cleanliness was exquisitely blended with simplicity. He loved his friends, was generous to his enemies and prayed to God for their welfare, and dealt equal justice to all, both friends and foes. He was extremely polite in his bearing with others and sympathetic to the poor and the distressed. He was greatly solicitous for the orphans and was extremely fond of children. He vindicated the rights of women over men, of slaves over their masters, of the ruled over the rulers. He was most hospitable to his guests, gentle in his speech, faithful to his

word. In respect of chastity and piety he was a perfect model and his detractors who saw him throughout his life could not point to the faintest slur on the clean sheet of his character.

Forgiveness was another radiant feature in the Prophet's character. It found its perfect manifestation in him. In this respect the injunctions given in the Quran are :

312. "Hold fast to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant and if a false imputation from the devil (wicked people) afflicts thee, seek refuge in Allah. surely He is Hearing, Knowing." (7 ; 199-200)

He stuck to these under the most trying circumstances. At the battle of Uhad when he was wounded, a comrade asked him to invoke Divine wrath on the enemy. He retorted : "I have not been sent as a curse to mankind but as an inviter to good and as a mercy. O Lord ! Grant guidance to my people, surely they know not what they do." To Abu Sufian who did everything he could against Islam and to his wife Hinda who mutilated his beloved uncle Hamza's corpse, he extended his unstinted forgiveness. His treatment of the vanquished city of Mecca is an outstanding example of his merciful dealings with his bitterest enemies.

He was exceedingly modest. The Quran bears testimony to it in these words :

313. "Surely, such a thing hurts the Prophet but he is too modest to tell you so and Allah does not forbear to tell the truth." (33 : 53)

But in matters of religion he would not shirk to point out if anybody was wrong. At the death of his infant son Ibrahim there was a complete solar eclipse which the superstitious considered as a sign of heavenly mourning. The Prophet at once removed their superstition by saying that an eclipse had nothing to do with the birth or death of any one. In short, the Hadith literature which records every incident of his life and teachings is full of illustrations depicting the illuminating traits of his character conforming to the sublime

morals of the Quran and attesting that the Prophet's character was indeed of a lofty standard. That is why the Holy Quran as we have seen, calls him as an exemplar to mankind.

3. The Prophet's Excellence over all other Prophets.

The one thing which places Muhammad (peace be upon him) high above all other prophets and greatmen is that his moral sublimity found expression in every phase of life, whereas the life of other known prophets affords an instance of moral greatness only in one or more aspects of life. This is hinted at in the following verse :

> 314. "We have made some of these apostles to excel the others ; among them are they to whom Allah spoke and some of them He exalted by many degrees of rank." (2 : 253)

This apparently contains a reference to the excellence of the Holy Prophet. Numerous other verses of the Holy Quran bear testimony to the greatness of the Holy Prophet. He is repeatedly spoken of as being endowed with all those qualities of greatness in the highest degree which to others were given only partially and in a lesser degree. The life of each prophet before Muhammad was limited to the cultivation of a particular phase of human character, but the Prophet developed every phase of it and displayed to perfection almost all human faculties. In his life every phase of human morals found a thorough manifestation. He was a perfect example for humanity. While other prophets served as a model in a particular line, Muhammad all by himself combined in his person in a much higher degree the collective virtues of all the prophets—the manliness of Moses, the tender-heartedness of Aaron, the generalship of Joshua, the patience of Job, the daring of David, the grandeur and wisdom of Solomon, the simplicity of John, the humility of Jesus. The foremost of all the Israelite prophets Moses was the embodiment of power and glory, and the last Jesus that of humiltty and meekness but the Holy Prophet gave expression to both of these phases in

his own person. Thus every spiritual luminary sent forth but one ray, a beam of light, in one particular direction, but the Prophet was the centre from which radiated rays of light in every direction.

4. The Prophet as Mercy to all.

It is for this reason he is declared to be a mercy to all the generations of men in the Quran.

315. We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures (*forms of existence*) (21 : 107)

This verse contains not only a reference to the merciful dealings of the Prophet with his opponents but it also signifies that the Prophet's advent was not only a mercy to the Arabs who were made the foremost nation of the world by his magic touch, but it was a mercy to the whole of humanity. The teachings of the Quran not only benefitted its followers, but even those who still reject it have been accepting many of its majestic principles and have prospered to the extent to which they have acted upon its principles. Islam has, moreover proved a mercy to the peoples of the world on account of having brought back into the world all the teachings of the previous prophets leading to the greatness and glory of man, which had been quite lost to the world before its advent and of having eradicated numerous superstitious beliefs and doctrines degrading humanity. The verse

316. "Wherein (i.e., the Quran) are all the right books." (98 : 3)

point out that the Quran has preserved in its pages all the revealed truths of the previous scriptures and in addition supplies their deficiencies and is free from all the errors that crept into the previous sacred books.

These facts clearly establish the excellence of the Holy Prophet above all other prophets of the world. Through him shall nations of the world be blessed. There is no doubt that the cimmerian darkness which prevailed over the whole world before his advent was dispelled by his teachings and light and learning followed the footsteps of Islam.

The Prophet is called "Mercy" for both the believers and the non-believers.

317. "A mercy from thy Lord that thou mayest warn a people to whom no warner came before thee that they might be mindful." (28 : 46)

318. "A mercy for those of you who believe." (9 : 61)

319. "To the believers he is compassionate, merciful." (9 : 128)

The people whom no warner had come before were the Arabs and indeed the Prophet's advent in Arabia was a mercy in this respect that the Arabs, a people who were never before considered as a nation and who had no back-ground of any past achievements contributing to the civilization of the world, were raised through the Prophet as a model nation (*Ummatan Waṣata* or *Khair-i-Ummat*) to deliver the final message of God to the world.

5. The Prophet as a Light.

320. "O people of the Book ! ......Indeed there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah. With it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path." (5 : 16)

The Prophet is here called "Light" because he leads men into light out of darkness, confirming the words of Jesus who had said in the prophecy of Paraclete that "he will guide you unto all truth" In another context the Quran calls the Prophet "A Light-giving lamp"

321. "O Prophet ! We have sent thee as a witness and as a bearer of good news and as a warner and as one inviting towards Allah by His permission and as a light-giving lamp." (33 :. 45-46)

Here the various capacities of the Prophet are mentioned, the last being a Light-giving lamp to illuminate the whole world with the message of Islam and diffuse its light everywhere.

6. The Prophet as God's Mouth-piece.

322. "By the star when it goes down, your companion (Muhammad) is neither lost nor deviated nor does he speak out of his own desire. It (the Quran) is nothing but a revelation taught to him by the master of Mighty Power." (53 : 1-5)

God begins comparing Muhammad to a star that appears to be setting to mankind. The man of knowledge knows that actually the star does not set nor does it deviate from its course. It is the earth's rotation that makes the star appear to be lost. The star remains in its own proper position and its own course. It seems to rise again and set again according to a fixed law—The movement of the earth round its own axis and its movement round the sun in its own orbit. It is the same with Muhammad. He is not lost or deviated but goes on in his proper course of life just as the star does.

Now, the star's movement as well as the earth's movements are not willed by themselves. They are subject to the pre-determined laws of God. It is so with Muhammad's message from God. He has not willed it out of his own desire; it is revealed to him. He is as much subject to the Will of God in his revelations as is the star in its movement or the earth in hers. And by whose will is this Quran taught to Muhammad ? By the Will of God. It is taught to Muhammad by the Master wielding mighty power.

These verses conclusively establish the sinlessness of the Prophet. He does not deviate from the right path and does nothing which is wrong, nor does he say anything which is not an expression of Divine Will. The Beneficent Allah teaches him the Quran" (55 : 1-2) and whatever he is taught he conveys to mankind. He is the mouth-piece of God Himself.

7. The Prophet's Heart is Expanded and His Esteem Raised.

323. "Have We not expanded thee thy breast and removed from thee thy burden which galled thy back and raised high the esteem in which thou are held." (94 : 1-4)

The breast is symbolically the seat of knowledge and highest feelings of love and affection, the treasure-house in which are stored the jewels of that quality of human character which approaches nearest to the Divine. The expanding of the breast signifies its illumination with Divine light and wisdom and its vastness for the reception of what to be revealed to him as well as to bear the severe struggles which he was to meet in inviting men to believe in the Unity of God, and the affliction arising from his persecutions by the unbelievers. The proof of the expansion of breast is abundantly met with in the Prophet's life. 1) in his praying for the forgiveness of his enemies after their persecution of him had reached its utmost limit; 2) in his actually forgiving his severest enemies when he triumphantly entered Mecca, an incident unparallelled in profance or sacred history; 3) in the broadness of his morals; 4) in enduring the hardest trials with the greatest forbearance and without ever uttering words of impartience; 5) in the complete trust which he retained in the Divine Being when facing the greatest dangers; 6) in the great fortitude shown by him on various occasions; 7) in performing with the utmost exactitude his multifarious duties as a spiritual teacher and guide, as a legislator, as a judge, as a general leading his forces to war, as a king and ruler, as a loving husband and as an affectionate father, as a friend, as a guardian of the interests of the poor and the orphans, and as occupying a number of other capacities. The expansion of the breast stands in one word for the greatness of the heart of the Prophet.

The burden which galled his back signifies his anxiety to raise his people from the ignorance and superstition in which they were involved. It was indeed a grievous and galling burden for a man to fight single-handed against sin. But God sent His Grace and Aid and that burden was removed or converted into joy and triumph in the service of the one true God.

The Prophet's virtues, magnanimity of his character and his love for mankind were fully recognised even in his life-time and his name stands highest among the heroic leaders of mankind. It is proclaimed along the name of Allah five times daily from

every minaret of every mosque in every corner of the globe when the call to prayer is given and he is affirmed as the Divine messenger who showed to mankind the way to achieve success in its earthly life and in the life after death.

8. **The Prophet as the Recipient of Unbounded Grace.**

324. "Surely, We have given thee "Kousar" (abundance of good) Therefore pray to they Lord and make sacrifice. Surely thy enemy is the one cut off from good." (108)

When the two infant sons of the Prophet from his wife Khadijah died, Abu Jahl and his pagan confederates taunted him that he shall be heirless. This revelation came to him as a consolation and a promise that he shall be the recipient of unbounded grace, knowledge, mercy and goodness, truth and wisdom, spiritual power and insight, the good of this life and the good of the hereafter. The Arabic word "*Kousar*" which is used in the Arabic text covers all these aspects of goodness. The marvellous success which the Holy Prophet attained in regenerating a fallen people is an unparalleled event in the history of the world and it is one of the features of abundant good promised to him in this life. To be entitled to receive the abundant good promised to him, the Holy Prophet is told to pray to his Lord and make sacrifice, thus showing that any one who is desirous of obtaining the good of this life and the good of the Hereafter should pray and make sacrifice as a symbol of the self-sacrificing spirit he wished to imbibe in himself in the way of God. He is told that his enemies shall be cut off from all good, not being able to attain their object in opposing the Holy Prophet nor shall their children be successors in their unbelief, and this prophecy was fulfilled by the propagation of Islam and a few years latter when the sons of his very detractors becoming the staunch supporters of the Prophet.

This abundance of good given to the Prophet shall never be cut off as foretold in the second verse. He is told that his exertions in establishing the religion of God shall be rewarded with success and this religion will not cease to exist to

confer its blessings on mankind, and its followers shall ever be praying to God to shower His blessings upon him for what he had done for them. In fact God Himself commands the believers to do so in these words :

325. "Surely, Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet; O ye who believe, call for Divine blessings on him and salute him with a becoming salutation." (33 : 56)

And in obedience to His commands the Muslims all the world over throughout the past fourteen centuries have invoked and are continuing to invoke the blessings of God upon him several times a day, and every time the name of the Prophet is pronounced or heard the invocation of blessings goes with it, and this will continue till the last day of the earth. The memory of no other person in the world is kept alive in this manner. This indeed is the reward promised which shall never be cut off.

9. The Prophet's Prayerfulness.

326. "Surely thy Lord knows that thou standest forth in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night and sometimes half of it, and sometimes a third of it." (73 : 20)

327. "And some part of the night awake for it, it is possible that thy Lord will raise thee to the place of praise and glory." (17 : 79)

328. "O thou who has wrapped up thyself! Rise to pray in the night except a little, or half of it, or lessen it a little or add to it and recite the Quran well-arranged." (73 : 1-4)

To receive abundance of grace and goodness which shall never be cut off, the Prophet was asked to pray and make sacrifice as we have seen under the previous heading. In verses 1-4 of *Surah* 73, he is ordered to pray in the night for a considerable time and again in the verse preceding it he is ordered to abandon sleep in the small hours of the morning (i.e., after midnight) to attain to the place of praise and glory. In obedience to this commandment the Prophet used to stand for prayers and recite the Quran for hours together in the

night, so much so, that his legs became sometimes swollen by the strain. This is testified by the Quran in verse 20 of *Surah* 73 quoted above. Once his wife, Ayesha, asked him : "Why dost thou exert thyself so strenuously in thy prayers, thou art the Messenger of God, chosen to receive mercy above all," to this he replied : "O Ayesha ! should I not be grateful to my Lord and express my thanks to Him for all the Grace He has bestowed upon me," This gives us a picture of how the Prophet used to spend his nights.

10. The Prophet's Truthfulness

329. "Surely, they do not call thee a liar but the unjust deny the communications of Allah." (6 : 33)

The Prophet was known among his compatriots by the name "*Al-Amin*" the trustworthy. He was highly reputed for truth as he was never guilty of having uttered a lie in his life. It was after his call to prophethood that he was charged as an impostor which was intended really to deny his Divine revelations.

A testimony to his veracity are those passages of the Quran in which a disapproval of certain of his acts was revealed to him and he did not suppress them but made it public. A person who fabricates a book himself would be the last man to expose his own inner thoughts in a delicate situation, compromising his own exalted position among his followers. He could have suppressed that portion of the revelation against his own self. At any rate, if it were left to the option of the individual, he himself would be the last person to give permanence to a reproval for his own acts. However, a man may disapprove of what he has himself done, he would never consent to such disapproval being made an incident that should be repeated day and night by his own followers. But the Prophet never hesitated to publish such revelations wherein his slight omissions and commissions were exposed. This shows how utterly truthful and honest Muhammad was.

This fact also reveals that the source from which the Prophet received his revelations was outside his own heart and

his own inclinations. Now, let us see what those passages are.

330. "He frowned and turned his back because there came to him a blind man and what would make thee know whether haply he may be purified and the Reminder profit him ? But as for him who is wealthy, thou dost attend to him and no blame is on thee if he would not purify himself, but as for him who comes to thee earnestly fearing the while, for him thou art diverted." (80 : 1-10)

Once a poor blind man interrupted the Prophet while he was discoursing with one of the members of the Quraishite aristocracy. The Prophet disliked this importunity of the blind man but God disapproved the behaviour of the Prophet. This blind man was Abdullah bin Maktum who rose afterwards in great estimation among the Muslim fraternity and once in Madinah actually deputised for the Prophet himself when he had gone out on a campaign. This incident is sufficient to show the magnanimity of the Prophet's heart that he never thought of suppressing a passage like this but gave it the same wide publicity as he gave to the passages containing his praises.

331. "And thou wast keeping in the mind what Allah was going to disclose and thou didst fear men and Allah had a greater right that thou shouldst fear him." (33 : 37)

Under the heading "The Prophet's Domestic Life" this passage has already been dealt with. It is enough to point out here that the Prophet did not like that people should object to his marrying Zainab, the divorced wife of his adopted son Zaid, as that was against the custom prevailing in the Arab society. But God wanted to abolish that custom as the status of an adopted son could not be equal to a real son.

332. "Allah pardon thee ! Why didst thou give leave until those who spoke the truth had become manifest to thee and thou hadst known the liars." (9 : 43)

This verse refers to the expedition of Tabuk when the Prophet was granting exemptions which were too liberal from a military point of view. He was actuated by motives of kindness as well as policy—kindness because even in the urgency of the moment he did not wish anyone who had an excuse to be refused exemption, and policy because if anyone did not come with hearty good-will he would be a burden instead of a help to the army. But that did not justify the slackers being let off so easily and, therefore, they were justly condemned. Though there was no violation of any Divine commandment in this instance, yet the lapse was not passed over unreproved,

11. The Prophet's Tenderness.

333. "May be thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them if they do not believe in this message." (18 : 6)

334. "Perhaps thou wilt kill thyself with grief because they do not believe." (26 : 3)

335. "Let not thy soul waste away in grief for them. Surely, Allah is cognizant of what they do." (35 : 8)

336. "Certainly an Apostle has come to you from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively soliciting respecting you, to the believers he is compassionate, merciful." (9 : 128)

These verses disclose the true picture of the Prophet's heart which grieved not for his followers alone, not for one tribe or clan, but for all humanity. They depict the anxiety which the Prophet had on account of the fallen humanity, an anxiety so great that it would almost kill him with grief. His was a life of absolute devotion to the cause of humanity, his only concern being that men should rise to the true dignity for which God had made them. He grieves for the burden of all and he is solicitous for the welfare of all. But there is

a special relation he bears to those who follow him; to them he is in addition compassionate and merciful.

337. It is due to mercy from Allah that thou dealest with them gently." (3 : 158)

This verse was revealed in connection with the disaster in the field of Uhad when the archers disobeyed his commands and left their strategic position. As a general leading men against overwhelming forces it required the Apostle to be very strict in punishing any delinquency, specially when disobedience to express orders had brought about such a heavy loss of life. But no, he was not a mere general. His ability in leading his men, in occupying positions of advantage in the field of battle, and in directing a handful of men three, four and sometimes ten times less than their own number, marks him out as a great general, yet his gentle manners and his forbearance in dealing with his friends as well as his foes stand in remarkable contrast with his capacity as a commander in the field of battle. It is related that after the tragedy of Uhad the Prophet did not speak even a harsh word to those who were guilty of disobeying his orders. He forgave them all. This was an outstanding example of the exquisite tenderness of his heart.

12. The Prophet is vouchsafed Divine Protection.

338. "For his sake there are angels following one another before him and behind him who guard him by Allah's commandment." (13 : 11)

339. "O Apostle ! Deliver what was revealed to thee from thy Lord, and if thou do it not, then thou hast not delivered His message; Allah will protect thee from the people." (5 : 67)

340. "Wait patiently for thy Judgement of thy Lord, for, surely thou art before Our eyes." (52 : 48)

The Prophet while at Mecca had to contend with the Quraish but when he migrated to Madinah his difficulties increased ten-fold. The Jews became his enemies and went

on conspiring against him until their extirpation from Madinah. The hypocrites were intriguing against him, and the Quraish had brought all the tribes of Arabia to crush him. He was thus amidst insurmountable dangers that threatened him from all quarters, and numerous plots against his life were being hatched. Hence the Divine revelation promised that he shall remain under Divine protection and before the eyes of God Himself.

13. The Prophet's Reliance on God.

Never for a moment did the Prophet harbour any fear of his enemies. His reliance on God and his belief in the ultimate triumph of his Mission were profound. Even when plots to take his life were being hatched at Mecca before his migration to Madinah, he fearlessly moved about day and night among them, He told all his companions to migrate from Mecca to Madinah, but he himself stayed there in the midst of his enemies almost alone. When he left Mecca and took refuge in a cave, the persecutors of Mecca sent scouts in all directions to trace the whereabouts of the Prôphet. The trackers arrived before the cavern and positively declared from the foot-prints of the fugitives that the wanted men were inside the cave. The two inside heard their conversation. There was no outlet for escape. Abu Bakr, his companion in flight, felt it to be a time of great peril, and he whispered his fears that they were only two against many. "Grieve not, Abu Bakr," said the Prophet, "We are not two,, God is with us," This incident is referred to in the Quran in these words :

341. Allah certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion, "Grieve not, surely Allah is with us." (9 : 40)

In the battle of Hunain the Muslims fell back because of the sudden onslaught of the enemy's archers. The Holy Prophet advanced alone towards the enemy shouting ; "I am the

Prophet of Allah, I am not a liar, I am the son of Abdul Muttalib." His clarion call brought followers back to his side. The fight that ensued was fierce and cruel but in the end the Prophet's utter reliance on God won the day for the Muslims. This is referred to in the following verses of the Quran :

342. "Assuredly Allah did help you in many battle-fields and on the day of Hunain......then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Apostle and believers." (9 : 25-26)

In the battle of Uhad when the whole of his army fell into a trap, he shouted regardless of all dangers to his own person to rally together the confused soldiers. It was an act of great danger which let the enemy know his position and he was therefore made the target of their attack. This is referred to in this verse :

343. "When you ran off precipitately and did not wait for any one and the Apostle was calling you from your rear." (3 : 152)

It was his great faith in the protection of God that prompted him to run such risks.

Another well-known incident which is related by his biographers is that one day while he was sleeping under a tree alone at a distance from his camp, Ghavis bin Haris, his deadliest enemy saw him and drawing his sword stealthily approached him. The Prophet awoke and saw him. Ghavis taunted, "O Muhammad ! Who is here to protect and save thee from my sword ? " Calmly came the reply "Allah !" Strange to say Ghavis was struck with awe and his sword fell from his trembling hand. The Prophet picked it up and in his turn questions him, "O Ghavis, who is there now to save thee from this thy very sword ?" "None ! " pleaded Ghavis. Then said the Prophet, "Learn from me to forgive and to be merciful to thy fallen foes." With these words he returned him his sword. This incident proves that the Prophet had not only a unique faith in God, but that he also believed that God was always with him to protect him. And why will he not do so when God Himself tells him :

344. "Say : Allah is sufficient for me; there is no God but He; on Him do I rely and He is the Lord of Mighty Power." (9 : 129)

14. The Prophet Entitled to Intercede

345. "And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession but he who bears witness of the truth and they know." (43 : 86)

The bearer of witness to truth was no other than the Holy Prophet, and they knew him well, for, he was the *Al-Amin* who had never told a lie or did anything untrustworthy. They had seen also the fulfilment of all the prophecies he made. This verse affirms in clear words the intercession of the Holy Prophet on behalf of his followers. In the verse : "Who is he that can intercede with Him except by His permission," (2 : 235) the principle is recognised that there may be intercession with Divine permission. It is true that Islam does not recognise the doctrine that man stands in need of a mediator to reconcile him with God and, therefore, mediation or intercession in the sense in which the Christian doctrine expounds it is alien to Islam. But there is another aspect of it. The Prophet to whom the Divine will is revealed is the model for his people. He is himself perfect and by pointing out a way enables others to attain perfection. In this sense he is called a "*Shafi*" or an intercessor. Those who take the Prophet for their model may thus attain to perfection which is the real meaning of salvation in Islam. But as all men are not equally gifted nor have all equal occasion to attain to a state of perfection although they might have exerted themselves to their utmost, Divine mercy will take them by their hand and amends will be made for such defects through the intercession, subject to God's permission, of the Holy Prophet who has served as a model to his followers. It is in this sense that Islam recognises the doctrine of intercession in the life-after-death.

16

The Farewell Pilgrimage

A year after the conquest of Mecca when the Hajj season arrived the Prophet sent Abu Bakr and three hundred Muslims to teach people the Islamic way of Hajj. Soon after Abu Bakr left the Prophet received the revelation prohibiting the idolaters to enter the Mosque at Mecca. He sent Ali to make the new proclamation to all concerned as detailed in chapter nine of the Quran from verse one to thirty seven.

These verses are a proclamation of Muhammad's independence of all earthly powers and God's declaration against all pagans of the freedom of Mecca had Hajj from all impurities and obscenities and idol-worship of all kinds. Four months were allowed to all pagans who were not allied to the Prophet in which they were free to move about. If during that time any pagan wanted instruction or help in knowing Islam, he was to be instructed and helped and safely conveyed back to his home. The treaties made with the pagan tribes were to be observed to the end of their term. After the expiry of the four months' respite given to the pagans of the expiry of the terms of agreement with the allied tribes, the control of the Ka'ba and the management of the pilgrimage was to be solely in the hands of the Muslims. The idolaters are spiritually filthy, and

as such, had no right of entry in the house of God which was now denuded of all idols and was now as pure an emblem of monotheism as it was in the time of Abraham. The idol-worshippers had nothing to do with it now, because the help they sought from their idols could no longer be obtained there. Idol-worship having been abolished the connection of idol-worshippers with the *Ka'ba* was entirely cut off so long as they bore witness to unbelief against themselves. But if they joined Islam, performed their prayers, and paid the zakat, they were to be on equal terms with the Muslims. We give below the verses in which these things are mentioned.

346. "This is a declaration of immunity by Allah and His Apostle towards those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement. So go about in the land for four months......those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement and they have not failed you, and have not backed up any one against you, fulfil their agreement to the end of their term.... if they repent and keep their prayer and pay the *zakat*, leave their way free to them; surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And if one of the idolaters seek protection till he hears the word of Allah, then, make him attain his place of safety." (9 : 1-6)

347. "The idolaters have no right to visit the Mosque of Allah while bearing witness to unbelief against themselves." (9 : 17)

348. "O ye who believe ! the idolaters are nothing but filthy; so, they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year." (9 : 28)

After those announcements deputations poured into Madinah from all over Arabia to learn the new faith. All this was the result of the conquest of Mecca, the victory at Hunain, and the expedition to Tabuk. No compulsion or force was used by the Prophet for their conversion. The Arabs united themselves in one block under the banner of Islam and the guidance of the Prophet. He had the satisfaction of seeing his mission accomplished, and there remained nothing but the last touches

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The Farewell Pilgrimage

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of the Master Spirit to perfect the faith or which he had been the last Ambassador on this earth.

349. "Allah bears witness that there is no God but He, so do the angels and those possessed of knowledge, He being the Maintainer of Justice; there in no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise. Surely, the only religion with Allah is Islam." (3 : 17-18)

The time for the last touches had come now, to perfect the favour of God on mankind. The Prophet sent messengers to all parts of Arabia asking people to join him in the performance of Hajj so that they and their successors may know for all time to come how to perform the Hajj, the consummation of all that Islam holds out to mankind. In doing so he was re-establishing the religion of Abraham and reviving the spirit of pilgrimage which Abraham demonstrated 2,500 years before Muhammad's birth.

350. "And proclaim amongst mankind the pilgrimage. They will come to thee on foot and upon all kinds of lean camels coming from every remote land, in order that they may witness advantages for them and that they may mention Allah's name during stated days upon what He has provided them of the four-footed cattle; then eat of them and feed the distressed ones and the needy." (22 : 27-28)

It was thus that the prayer of Abraham was being fulfilled to the letter. The Quran repeats it in these words :

351. "Our Lord ! And raise up in them an Apostle from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book, and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." (2 : 129)

The Prophet was reciting the Quran to the people - teaching them the real meaning thereof and explaining its wisdom and purifying the souls of mankind. No greater task has ever been given to any man and no man has performed his task so thoroughly as did the Prophet. The people responded to his

call not in hundreds and thousands but in tens upon tens of thousand. Tents were pitched outside Madinah to accommodate them and a quarter lakh of people gathered together from all corners of Arabia in the brotherhood of Islam. The people who earlier were tearing each other to pieces and given to the grossest evil practices and savagery of all kinds were now acting as if they had but one soul devoted to righteous living.

For twenty years they had been carrying on the most vigorous fight against the Prophet, and at last had, by hard experience, found him nothing but the true embodiment of his unique name—Muhammad—the praise-worthy, and they showed their appreciation of his teachings and virtues by their presence at Madinah in this tenth year of the Hijrah at his call. Indeed they had been regenerated.

This vast concourse of men along with their bag and baggage for the long journey and one animal each for the sacrifice to be performed at the house of God, moved slowly towards Mecca, performing their daily glorification of God in huge congregations five times a day. When they reached Zul Halifa, *Ihram* the pilgrims garb was put on. In this garb all men stood before their Lord as equals. The king could not be distinguished from the beggar nor the nobleman from the labourer. Here was liberty, fraternity, and equality carried into practice and not only preached as a theory from the pulpit.

With their bodies washed and clean, their hearts purified, and wearing the white garb of angels in human shape, the Muslims followed their brother-in-faith, their beloved leader the Holy Prophet, and with one voice cried out : *Labbaika Allahumma Labbaika*, (Here am I at Thy service O my Lord !).

After reaching Mecca and going through all the rituals of the Hajj the Prophet mounted his camel and stood on the Mount of Mercy (*Al Jabl-u-Rahmat*) in the plains of Arafat and delivered his address. This is called "The *Khutbatul Wad'a* (the farewell sermon). It was a remarkable sermon delivered

on this remarkable occasion. The words that fell from his lips were repeated aloud by selected persons in order to reach the farthest ends of this vast assembly. We have reproduced this sermon in English as appendix at the end of this Chapter for the benefit of our readers.

When the Prophet finished his address the revelations came :

352 "This day have I perfected for you your faith and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5 : 3)

It was thence-forward unnecessary that another messenger should arise. All the requirements of man, spiritual, moral and temporal had been provided for, in the Holy Quran. This would be the one fountain of Divine knowledge at which humanity would drink for all time to come. No better occasion could have been chosen to proclaim the momentous and happy news of the perfection of religion. This was a place which had never in the history of the world witnessed any temporal struggle or bloodshed. This was an assembly which had met there for the sole purpose of Divine glorification, cutting assunder all ties of the world for the time being. This was a congregation wherein human equality reigned supreme. and all met as brothers to do homage to their Lord on high with hearts filled with awe.

This was a remarkable sight of the final triumph of truth. The Prophet's mission on earth had been fulfilled. His efforts had been crowned with such success as had never fallen nor will ever fall to the lot of another mortal. The time had come when he should retire from earthly life, the great object of which had been accomplished.

Not more than two months had passed when the call from above came. Having faithfully rendered his obligations towards his earthly companions he now returned to the loving bosom of the companionship on high. The praised one—Muhammad—joined the company of one who is always praised

and glorified. May the Lord shower His choicest blessings on him.

353. "Every one on this earth must pass away, but there will endure for ever the countenance of thy Lord, the Lord of glory and honour." (55 : 25-27)

As I stood before the shrine of this mighty and yet poor king, my feelings—and the feelings of all those who were there—got the better of me. I wept as I had never wept before! In his presence we all felt so small, so insignificant, so utterly contemptible. Right before me in his eternal sleep lay one who had endured much, and suffered and sacrificed much in the cause of truth, one who gave to the world a noble conception of Nature, of man's relationship to the Almighty, of the duty of tolerance and brotherhood. A memory of things beautiful, of a world of infinite peace and contentment, rose before me. It was hard to tear myself away from his august presence. He is a link that binds over seven hundred millions of humanity into one single, living, and enduring brotherhood. They sang his praise in all the known languages of the world. It was the sweetest music that I had ever heard.

APPENDIX

The Farewell Sermon

O ye men ! Listen to me. I do not think after this year you and I shall ever meet in this place. Remember, there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah. He is one, He has no partners. All Sovereignty belongs to Him, all praise is due to Him. He is the giver of life and death and He has power over all things.

O ye men ! From now onwards till you meet your Lord, your lives and properties and your honour must be as sacred to one another as this sacred day, in this sacred month, and in this sacred town. Let those present take this message to those absent. You shall have to meet your Lord very soon who will call you to account for your deeds. I have conveyed His message to you.

He who is entrusted with property belonging to another shall deliver his trust to whom it belongs. All transactions involving usury are cancelled, but your capital shall be yours. Do no injustice to others nor injustice be done to you. God has forbidden usury. This day all sums of interest are remitted including that of Abbas, son of Abdul Muttalib.

This day retaliation of all bloodshed of the time of ignorance is abolished and foremost of all, the murder of Rabi bin Haris is forgiven.

O ye men ! This day Satan has despaired of re-establishing his power in this land. But should you obey him even in what may seem to you trifling, it will be a matter of pleasure for him. But he will be followed in other lands. Therefore be careful of your faith lest the people of other lands diminish your good deeds.

O ye men ! The postponement of sacred months is an addition of the days of disbelief. Those who choose disbelief are misguided thereby. They declare it sacred one year and non-sacred another year in order to make up the number of sacred months fixed by Allah, so that they make non-sacred what Allah has made sacred. And time revolves as it has been shaped since the day heavens and earth were created by Him. And the number of months with Allah are twelve of which four are sacred— three consecutive months of Shawwal, Ze-Qaeda, and Zil-Hajja and Rajab between Jamadi and Shaban.

O ye men! Fear Allah and carry out His injunctions about women. You have got them unto you as a sacred trust from Allah and you have made them lawful to you by His word. You have your rights over your wives and they have theirs over you. Your rights over them are that they should observe chastity and avoid immodesty. If, however, they go astry. You may keep them off or punish them without causing injury. But if they repent, you may forgive them. Their rights over you are that you should feed them and clothe them with fairness, and instruct each other to treat the women-folk fairly, for, they have been given in your charges and have no control over anything by themselves.

And as regards your slaves, see that you give them to eat of what you yourselves eat and clothe them with what you clothe yourselves.

O ye men!Listen to what I say and take it to heart. I have conveyed my message to you and I have left with you the Book

of Allah (the Holy Quran) and the *Sunnah* (religious procedure) of His Messenger. If you take hold of them, your affairs will not go wrong.

O ye men ! Listen to my message and understand it well. There is no superiority for the Arab over the non-Arab and for the non-Arab over the Arab, for you are all children of Adam and Adam was created out of dust. You have been taught that each Muslim is a brother of every other Muslim and that all Muslims form one brotherhood. It is not lawful for any man to appropriate for himself anything which belongs to his brother except with the latter's own free-will and consent. Therefore do not be unjust to one another.

O ye men ! There is no Prophet after me. There is no new religious community (*Ummat*) after you. You shall have to serve your Lord Allah, perform prayers five times, fast in the month of Ramazan, pay *zakat* on your properties, perform *Hajj* to the sacred House of Allah, obey your religious and temporal leader; even if a black man from among the slaves is chosen as your leader and he governs over you according to the Book of Allah, follow him and obey him. As a reward for these from Allah you will enter Paradise.

Let all those who are present here carry this message to those who are absent. O Allah ! Have I not delivered Thy message ?

And the valley resounded with the reply from the thousands human throats with one accord : "Aye, that though hast !"

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